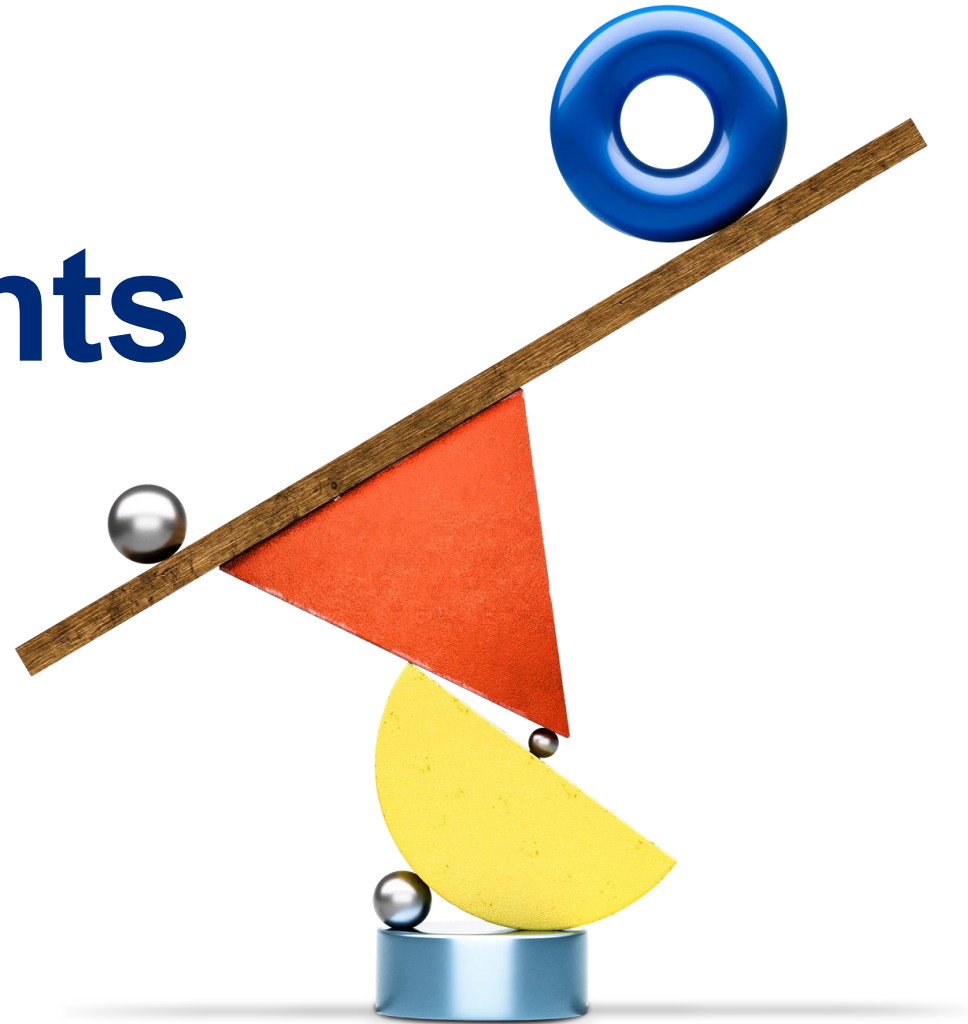


Navigating High Stakes Environments

Negotiation Skills for Finance Officers

HSFO Conference: August 3–7, 2025

Sam Espinosa, National Practice Leader, Mercer
Gwyn Volk, Principal & Senior Healthcare Consultant, Milliman



1. Introductions
2. Setting the Stage
3. Overview of the “Positive No” Model
4. Application of the Model to Human Service Officers
5. Thank you!

Agenda

Introductions



Session Facilitators



Sam Espinosa
National Practice Leader
Mercer Government



Gwyn Volk
Principal & Senior Healthcare Consultant
Milliman

Session Panelists



Catrina Lucero
Chief Financial Officer
Washington State Health Care Authority



Pam Diez
Chief Operating Officer
Louisiana Department of Health



R. Demetrius Taylor
Deputy Commissioner, Finance
Georgia Department of Human Services

Setting the Stage

2

Cautionary Tale

The cost of stressed relationships and mistrust manifest in many ways:

**Poor
consumer
outcomes**

**Inaccurate
payments**

**Team
fatigue**

**Budget
overruns**

**Misuse of
resources**

Not all conflict can be avoided, but all conflict can be managed.

By using a systematic and stepwise approach to difficult situations we can improve our outcomes.



Poll question #1

Where have you experienced the most conflict when communicating a decision or working to reach consensus on an issue?



- Intra-agency (the call is coming from inside the house!)
- Interagency (hey, I thought they agreed with us!)
- State legislators
- Providers
- Managed care organizations
- Consumer advocates

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Poll question #2

What is at the root of the conflict?

You may submit more than one response!



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Overview of the “Positive No” Model

A Model for Conflict Minimization or Avoidance

The Power of a Positive No



Prepare

Anchor in Your “Yes”

- Clarify your core values and what you’re protecting
- Identify your deeper mission or purpose
- Understand emotional triggers and prepare your Best Alternative to a Negotiated Agreement (BATNA)
- Decide what to do if your “No” is not accepted



Deliver

Say “No” Clearly and Respectfully

- Be direct and calm without apology or anger
- Use values-based reasoning: “Because I value X, I cannot Y”
- Stand your ground while showing respect



Propose

Create a Path to “Yes”

- Offer constructive alternatives
- Seek mutual benefit and shared interests
- Stay flexible while preserving your core “No”
- Practice responses and anticipate objections

Commit to Patience, Presence, Plain Facts, and Perseverance (PPPP)

A Model for Conflict Minimization or Avoidance

The Power of a Positive No



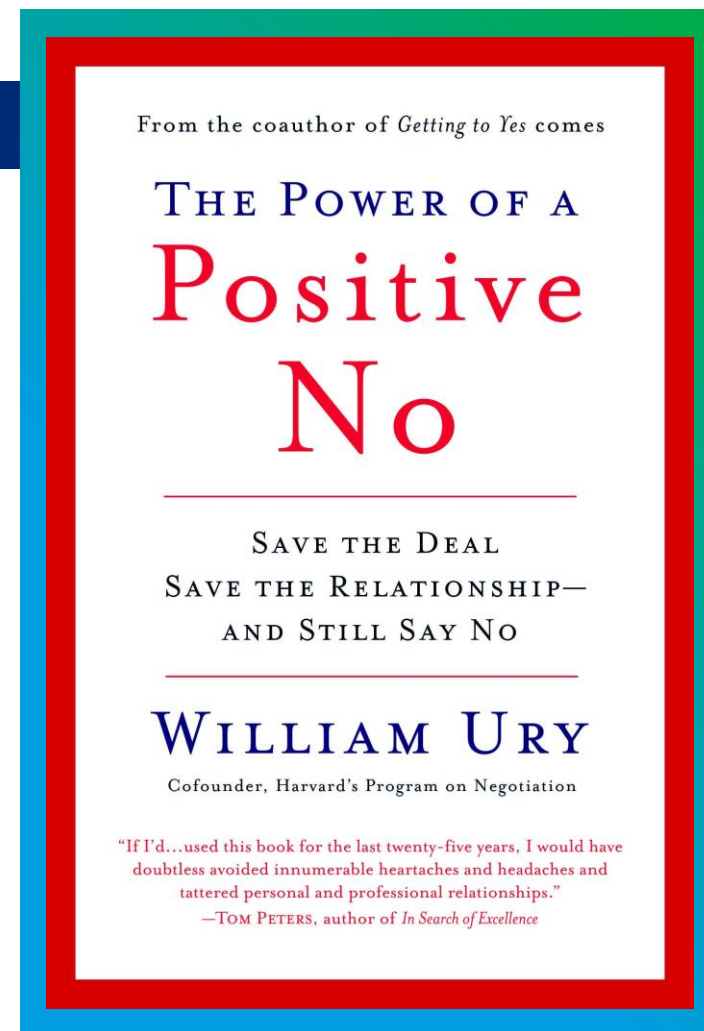
Re-Evaluation Loop

- Re-anchor if the situation evolves
- Return to your values and reframe as needed



Optional: Self-Awareness Prep

- Recognize fear of conflict
- Practice responses and anticipate objections



Application of the Model to Human Service Officers



4

Grounding in Organizational Mission, Core Values and Regulations

- Agency or program mission statements
- Agency or program strategic plans
- Federal regulations
- State regulations



Example – Hawaii Medicaid Med-Quest Division Mission and Goals

Mission:

Empower Hawai'i's residents to improve and sustain wellbeing by developing, promoting and administering innovative and high-quality healthcare programs with aloha.

Goals:

- Improve the health care status of the member population;
- Minimize administrative burdens, streamline access to care for enrollees with changing health status, and improve health outcomes by integrating the demonstration's programs and benefits;
- Align the demonstration with Affordable Care Act;
- Improve care coordination by establishing a "provider home" for members through the use of assigned primary care providers (PCP);
- Expand access to home and community-based services (HCBS) and allow individuals to have a choice between institutional services and HCBS;
- Maintain a managed care delivery system that assures access to high-quality, cost-effective care that is provided, whenever possible, in the members' community, for all covered populations;
- Establish contractual accountability among the contracted health plans and health care providers;
- Continue the predictable and slower rate of expenditure growth associated with managed care; and expand and strengthen a sense of member responsibility and promote independence and choice among members that leads to more appropriate utilization of the health care system.

Source: <https://medquest.hawaii.gov/en/about/mission-statement.html>

Example – Nevada Department of Human Services Division of Child & Family Services Mission Statement

DCFS recognizes that Nevada's families are our future and children, youth and families thrive when they:

- *Live in safe, permanent settings*
- *Experience a sense of sustainable emotional and physical well-being*
- *Receive support to consistently make positive choices for family and the common good*

Source: <https://dcfs.nv.gov/About/Mission/>

Example – Federal Regulations

- Medicaid provider payments under fee-for-service must be consistent with the principles of efficiency, economy, and quality of care, and sufficient to provide access to care equivalent to the general population.
(§ 1902(a)(30)(A) of the Social Security Act)
- Medicaid managed care capitation payments must be actuarially sound, covering reasonable, appropriate, and attainable costs in providing covered services to enrollees in Medicaid managed care programs.
(42 CFR 438.4)

Delivering a Respectful “No” and an Alternative “Yes”

Strategies for Human Service Officers

| | | | |
|--|---|---|---|
| Succinct and clear messaging — includes consideration of prior messaging and history with stakeholder(s). | Establishing parameters regarding the limitations of agency decision-making authority , e.g., need for state legislators to approve funding increases. | Framing operational considerations — what is possible to do within the current system, and what would require additional investment/changes (and what does that timing look like). | Leveraging data to reach a common understanding of the issue — additional time and dialogue may be needed to achieve this. |
| Considering who needs to be “at the table” regardless of who brought up the issue at hand — within your own agency, across agencies and across external stakeholders. | Identifying most appropriate vehicle for conversation — assess current avenues/meetings before creating new ones. | Providing perspective on what can be done in the short-term versus long-term — acknowledging the benefits of setting the foundation for future larger scale changes. | Consistency in engagement and transparency to build/maintain trust. |

Panel Discussion



Become the Panelist!

Group Activity



Resources

Books

[The Power of a Positive No: Save the Deal Save the Relationship and Still Say No](#) by William Ury (2007)

[Getting to Yes: Negotiating Agreement Without Giving In](#) by Roger Fisher and William Ury (2011)

[Possible: How We Survive \(and Thrive\) in an Age of Conflict](#) by William Ury (2024)

Articles

[“Negotiating without being a jerk”](#), Yale Alumni Magazine (2022) by Barry Nalebuff

[“How Do You Grade Out as a Negotiator?”](#), Harvard Business School (2015) by Michael A. Wheeler

Podcasts

[Negotiate Anything](#), LinkedIn

Thank you!

