

## NEGOTIATION TIP 53

In the March 2016 issue of Negotiation Briefings article “Should You Appeal To Their Sense Of Sympathy?” ( Negotiation Briefings, March 2016, Vol 19, Number 3) The Editors cite new research (“ Is There A Place For Sympathy In Negotiation? Finding Strength in Weakness”, by Aiawa Shirako, Gavin J. Kilduff and Laura J. Kray, Organizational Behavior and Human Decision Processes, 2015) that indicates that sharing weakness in a manner that creates sympathy in your counterpart may have beneficial impact on your outcomes.

The research postulated whether exposing weakness created a “strategic “response that took advantage of the exposed weakness or an “emotional” response that triggered sympathy and inspired more favorable outcomes. Their experiments indicated that emotion is the stronger result and can actually be more beneficial to all sides than simple rational justifications or even requests for “fairness”.

Rational appeals based on justifications or performance received less beneficial outcomes than sympathy inducing appeals. They also introduced “fairness” (based on standards etc.) into the mix. Fairness appeals were more effective than rational appeals, but emotional appeals resulted in the best outcomes.

Their conclusions suggest to the Editors that emotional revelations by negotiators who are perceived to have low power may cause the counterpart to act more generously and try to create joint value. More powerful parties though, may want to focus more on fairness as opposed to sympathy which could be construed as inauthentic based on relative power. The Editors further caution that fairness and rational arguments have proven compelling and effective and may work well in conjunction with an emotional appeal in the appropriate circumstances rather than being excluded. The Editors also caution not to fabricate vulnerabilities and weakness in a ploy that would violate moral codes or adversely impact your relationships or reputation.