



The Dance of Persuasion

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Influencing others is much like leading on a dance floor. A common dance step most of us learn is two steps forward, one step back, two steps forward, and so on. Persuasion, like dancing, can be accomplished with these same series of steps. It is the movement of forging forward for awhile and then retreating back to manage differences that inspires others to become receptive to your ideas.

Persuasive steps that can create movement forward are diplomacy, giving others credit where credit is due, and asking for your partner's advice. In contrast, stepping back is taking time out to understand other points of view and address different needs. Stepping back is the necessary and complimentary action to moving forward as it creates readiness and stability to move forward together.

There will be people and situations that upset you and are against your goals. It is tempting to push forward hard with debate and then the usual stand off occurs. Arguments are not usually persuasive. Here are some tips on how to dance persuasively using conversation as your dance floor.

The very first step forward is stating your case in a diplomatic manner, more like a compelling idea. Starting out with positive and friendly interactions promote listening, makes dancing with you tolerable, and will make your partner want to stay in the conversation with you.

The next step forward in persuasion is to acknowledge you and your partner's good intentions and ideas and concerns as they come up, even when they run counter to your own. Yes, even if they clumsily step on your toes. "Yes, I can see where you are coming from given your perspective," is simply a conversational step to keep everyone dancing in the same direction. Another way to improve the way you dance

together is to acknowledge what is going well, even when there are obstacles that haven't been resolved, as it generates more good will and more good ideas.

Another persuasive move forward is to ask for your partner's advice of "What would you do if you were in my shoes?" You can find out how they think. At the same time they get a glimpse into your world, which improves your ability to move gracefully together in a way that honors both of your needs.

As you advance your ideas forward, remember to take the time to step back to check your partner's response before forging ahead. On and on the dance steps go that make small but significant movements in new directions.

Next time you experience the disappointment of an interaction losing ground remember to step back to take care of differences by asking questions about what is going on, what they need, and explore how they are responding to your requests and ideas. Progress in a negotiation is not a straight line but a series of zigzag movements of two steps forward, one step back, and so on.

When you can understand that stepping back is an important and necessary part of moving forward, you can see signs of progress that you might otherwise have missed. By incorporating these simple dance steps into your conversations you will be able to advance your ideas more powerfully.

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