Understanding Your Interests

- The first step of negotiation involves really understanding what you are seeking and why you want it. This means knowing your own interests.
- One reason you need to know this is because you need to look out for your own interests in a negotiation. The other reason is that talking about interests instead of positions can help to “soften” the negotiation, and can lead to an agreement that is good for both parties.
- Only by first being open and sharing our interests can we expect the other person to be open and to want to work with us towards a good solution.
- To know your own interests, start by thinking about what you want to ask for from the other person—this is your position.
- Then ask yourself: why am I asking for that? Keep asking yourself why until you can’t think of any more interests.
- Then ask yourself: are there any other things that I care about than these I am asking for now?
Let’s use an example.

Example: Understanding Your Interests

Let’s say you ask your mother or guardian if you may go out to see a friend. She says no, but you continue to insist. What is your position?

✓ I want to go out to see a friend.

Great. Now, let’s learn why you want to go out. What are some possible reasons? (Let the students give some possible reasons why they would want to see friends.)

OK, in this case, the girl has a few reasons for wanting to go out (repeat a few of the reasons the students gave you for wanting to see their friends, such as:)

✓ I miss my friend, since we are in different classes this year.
✓ I want to do homework with my friend, since my friend is very good at mathematics.
✓ I want to have some fun and just relax.

If we asked “why” even more deeply, we would see that you want these things to experience companionship, and also to do well in school.

But there are also some other things you care about. What else do you think you care about?

✓ Having a good relationship with my mother/guardian.

When we only knew your position, it seemed like the only way for you to get what you wanted was for your mother or guardian to agree to let you go out. But, now that we know your interests, we can see that your mother or guardian shares some of these interests.

Your mother or guardian wants you to do well in school too. And your mother or guardian cares about your relationship too. One way you can meet your own interests and your mothers’ would be for your friend to come over. There might also be a chance that after hearing your deeper interests, your mother or guardian would agree to let you go.

What do you think of this example? Can you think of a time when explaining why you wanted to do something – your interests – made a difference? (Allow the students to discuss this idea for a few minutes and bring up examples.)

Understanding your interests is just the first step. To have a good negotiation, you also have to work to share your interests with the other person.
You do this because, as we discussed yesterday, we cannot have a good negotiation if we only say our positions, and not our interests. We need to talk about interests to find a good solution.

**Takeaway:** *(have students repeat after you)*

- Talking about *interests* instead of *positions* is an important part of negotiation and can help lead to a good agreement.