Walking Away

Understanding our interests and other options helps us to know when we should continue negotiating with someone and when we should walk away.

Walking away means leaving the negotiation, and choosing our other option. It happens when you cannot negotiate an agreement that is good for both people.

Sometimes you walk away because one party is being unreasonable, but you might also need to walk away if, for some reason, there is just no agreement that can meet both people’s needs.

Let’s look at an example. Here is an example of a girl who really wants a phone. She is talking to her friends one day in the compound about the kind of phone she wants, when a man in a car pulls up beside them. (Read scene aloud – if there are two coaches, each coach can take one role.)

Example: The Strength to Say “No”

**Man:** You know, I could give you the kind of phone you want. I can get it from my work.

**Girl:** Really? How much would it cost?

**Man:** No, I could even get it for you for free.

**Girl:** Ha! How can a cell phone be free? Those phones cost at least 200 pin!

**Man:** I can give it to you for free, as long as you promise to let me take you for a drink on Saturday. I will bring the phone and pick you up.

**Girl:** Umm…

**Man:** So, let’s pause the scene. What happened here? What is the man asking for?

✓ He wants to go out with her. He might want to have sex with her

**Is this a healthy situation for the girl to get into?** (Allow the students to answer.)

✓ No!

**Should the girl agree to it?** (Make sure all students understand the scenario.)

✓ No!

**OK, let’s go back to the scene.**

**Man:** So, do we have an agreement?

**Girl:** No. I do not think that is a good agreement. You are asking me to compromise my morals, and there is no price for that. I am just going to get a used phone from one of my friends. I do not need something so flashy, anyway.
Ok, what happened here? Why did the girl walk away?

(Allow them to discuss until someone makes a point such as:)

✓ They could never have agreed, because the girl would have to do something she doesn’t think is right.

Great. In this case, there is no agreement that will make both parties happy, so the smart thing to do is to walk away.

Focusing only on positions can lead you to do things you might regret, because you get so focused on that one thing (like getting a phone). When you instead think about interests, you realize that there are many things you value. (Show hand motion of open hand going away from the fist.)

Sometimes we have interests that are in conflict with each other. The girl in this story might really want a phone right now. That is what we call a short-term interest. But what else does she want, which seems in conflict to her short-term interest?

✓ She wants to be healthy. She wants to keep her morals.

That’s great – you’re describing her long-term interests. Sometimes what we want right now can put our long-term interests like health or education at risk.

It is better to give up something that you want in the short-term (like the phone) to not harm your long-term interests, like your health or education. When that happens, you might choose to walk away. We’ll talk more about choosing between long-term and short-term interests tomorrow.

As girls, it can be hard to say no to people, because you may feel that is not your place. Does anyone here ever find that they have trouble saying no? (Allow the students to answer. You can prompt them with questions such as “What makes it hard to say no sometimes?”)

Even though it can be hard to say no, sometimes we have to say no to protect ourselves. What are some situations when saying “no” can help us protect ourselves? (Allow the students to answer. You can refer back to these answers and incorporate the ideas in the next discussion.)

✓ When someone asks you to have sex

✓ When someone wants you to drink alcohol

✓ When someone wants you to lie, or cover for them
✓ When someone wants you to do something against your morals

Discussion: The Strength to Say “No”

➢ The first step of negotiation involves understanding ourselves and our interests. When we do this, it gives us the power to reach a good agreement with our partner when possible, or to walk away when it is not.

➢ You just gave some good examples of times when saying “no” is absolutely the right thing to do in order to meet our interests—meaning our underlying needs and values.

➢ When you say “no” in order to protect your needs and values, you are really saying “yes” to the things you care about. This gives you the strength to say no.¹

➢ Let’s think about that for a minute. If a girl says “no” to having sex with her boyfriend, what is she saying “yes” to? (Prompt them if they don’t understand this – we want them to get to the reasons a girl would say no to sex with her boyfriend.)

✓ She’s saying yes to being healthy

✓ She’s saying yes to staying in school longer, continuing her education.

✓ She’s saying yes to acting within her morals.

➢ Sometimes a good trick for saying “no” is to explain why we are doing so—what we are saying “yes” to. For example, if you want to say “no” to sex with a boyfriend, you can say, “I care deeply about my health and my education. I worry that having sex puts those at risk. Therefore, I do not want to have sex.”

➢ We started this discussion thinking about how we always have the option of walking away. Let’s think of all the ways we have of doing that? What are ways of walking away: (allow them to answer until they identify three main ways of walking away –

(i) physically walking away,

(ii) a simple no thank you, or

(iii) explaining what they are saying ‘yes’ to.

If they don’t identify when each of these are appropriate, you can help make those points. If they are slow to start, you can prompt them, such as “what should you do if

¹ From Ury (2007), Power of a Positive No.
you’re in danger?” “What could you do if you have an important relationship with the other person?”

☑️ You can just walk away

☑️ Yes. When might we want to just walk away?
  
  ✔️ If you’re in danger
  
  ✔️ If you don’t know the other person

☑️ “Walking away” doesn’t just mean physically walking away. What are some other ways to walk away from the negotiation?

☑️ Say “no,” or “no, thank you.”

☑️ Great. When might that be a good way to walk away?

  ✔️ If you are with a family member or someone you don’t want to be rude to.

☑️ Great, what’s another way?

  ✔️ Explain what you are saying yes to

☑️ Sometimes it’s important to also explain what your interests are, what we are saying “yes” to. This can be helpful for issues that might come up again, like the girl saying no to sex with her boyfriend.

☑️ Today, we learned the first step of negotiation—the “Me” part. Our goal in negotiation is to go from two fists hitting each other to two hands forming a win-win agreement. The first step in doing that is to open up our own fist, which represents your position, to find your interests. (Use the hand motions as you explain these concepts.)

☑️ We need to walk away from a negotiation when agreeing would go against our values or safety. In those cases, we can use our other option. But, in most cases, we want to try negotiating before we walk away.
Coach Checklist: (after this discussion the girls should understand:)

• There are always other options to negotiating.
• Thinking about our other options can help us know when to walk away, because we will know what we can do instead of negotiating.
• Sometimes walking away is the only way to meet our long-term interests.
• Knowing that you always have another option in a negotiation tells you that you never have to agree to something that hurts you or does not meet your interests.

Takeaway: (have students repeat after you)

➢ Sometimes the best way to protect ourselves is to walk away—to say “yes” to our values by saying “no.”