I The Problem

The authors argue that the major problem in many negotiations is that people assume positions that are either **Hard** or **Soft**. They suggest that, rather than being either hard on the people and the problem, or soft on people and problem, it is possible to be soft on the people and hard on the problem. They call this approach **Principled negotiation** or **Negotiation on its merits**.

II The Method

They suggest the following approach:

Separate the people from the problem

The purpose of this step is to recognise that emotions and egos can become entangled with the problem in negotiations, and that this will adversely affect your ability to see the other party's position clearly. This results in adversarial rather than cooperative interactions. This step involves:

* Clarifying perceptions
* Recognizing and legitimising emotions
* Communicating clearly (c.f. Stephen Covey's ***Listen first to understand, then speak to be understood***)

Focus on interests, not positions

In this step there is exploration of the true interests underlying the positions of each side, rather than a focus on the superficial positions with which parties come to the table. The initial positions presented may obscure what the parties really want. It is therefore essential to:

* Ask questions to explore interests
* Talk about your own interests

Generate options for mutual gain

In this step time is for parties to set aside time together to generate alternative candidate solutions. The idea is that parties contribute together creatively to generate possibilities for **mutual gain** i.e. a **Win-Win** agreement. This step involves:

* Brainstorming
* Broadening options
* Looking for mutual gain
* Making their decision easy

Insist on using objective criteria

The final step is to use mutually agreed and objective criteria for evaluating the candidate solutions. During this stage they encourage openness and surrender to principle not pressure. This step involves:

* Fair standards
* Fair procedures

III Yes But...

What if they are more powerful?

In these circumstances they suggest that any negotiation should aim to:

1. Protect you against an agreement you should reject: they recommend that you should prepare a **BATNA** (Best Alternative to a Negotiated Agreement) prior to the negotiation i.e. a Red Line which will not be crossed
2. Make the most of your assets: they recommend that the better your BATNA the greater your power

What if they won't play?

They suggest 3 approaches (to encourage and coach the other party to use Principled Negotiation too):

1. You should use principled negotiation to encourage them to do the same
2. If they continue to attack using positional bargaining, refuse to retaliate and redirect their attacks on the problem. They term this **Negotional Jujitsu** after the oriental martial art in which the attackers blows are deflected.
3. Involve a third party to fuse the views of the opposing parties, which they term a **One Text Procedure**.

What if they use dirty tricks?

They give examples of dirty tricks that can be used in negotiation, such as lies, psychological abuse and pressure tactics. They describe the 2 common responses seen, either of appeasement or reciprocal dirty tricks.

Instead they recommend a 3-pronged approach:

1. Recognition of the trick being played (so that you can ignore it)
2. Drawing attention to the trick being played
3. Negotiation about the negotiation itself i.e. about the rules with which the negotiation will be conducted

IV In Conclusion

The book advises the reader to practice using the method.