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# Stoicism: The Secret To Managing Emotional Triggers

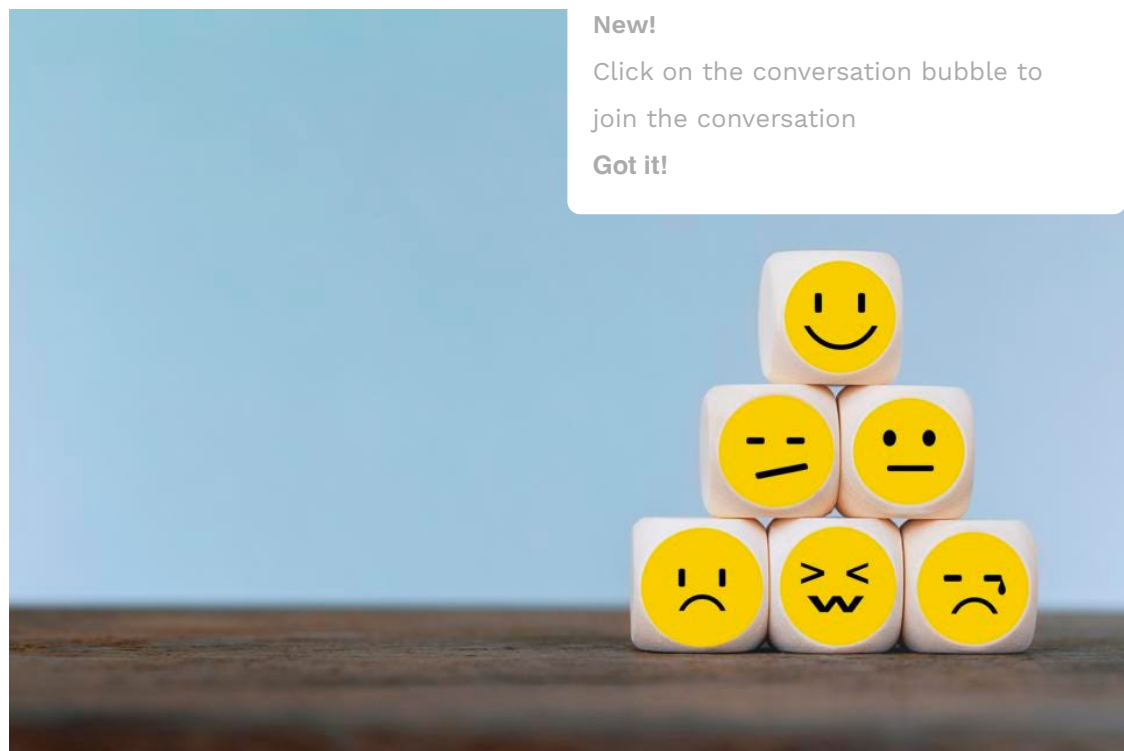
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Douglas J. Witten is a mediator, arbitrator, negotiation coach and founder of Innovative ADR International LLC. After becoming a mediator in 2003, Witten has dedicated his career to helping individuals negotiate better - at work and at home. He joined *Negotiate Anything* to discuss the principles of stoicism and tools for managing emotions during difficult conversations.

## **What Makes Emotion Management So Difficult**

Emotion management is important because it helps us make clearer, better decisions. Also, the most productive conversations will be guided by reason. For this to happen emotions need to be channeled in a healthy way - especially when tensions are high.

Oftentimes when preparing for negotiations, we focus all of our attention on perfecting a strategy and identifying our moves. Preparing for emotional triggers is equally important. “It’s not things that upset us, it’s *our reactions* to things that upset us,” Witten shared.

## **Finding Your Inner Mediator**

Also known as the “mediator mindset”, your inner mediator essentially acts as an objective third party that helps you paint a full picture of this situation before you.

“I started thinking that to the extent that people can call on their inner mediator, they are in the best position to solve conflict most effectively,” Witten explained.

The theory is that if you can train your brain to see the situation

objectively, you will be better prepared to respond appropriately - both emotionally and strategically.

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“What hurts us is our response to the situation, not the situation itself,” Witten said. “If we can change our perspective, we can look at the exact same situation but appreciate it in a different way.”

Beyond negotiations, the ability to think objectively will help improve overall decision-making as well. The quality of our lives really rests on the quality of our decisions. If a person can improve their ability to make decisions, they can improve every aspect of their life.



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“This is about decision making and trying to get the best decisions we can make - and having some mental cues and models for doing that.”

### **Stoicism as a Tool for Emotion Management**

Stoicism is a 2000 year old ancient philosophy that directly applies to many of the most difficult conversations we face today.

At its core, stoicism is all about acceptance. One accepts what they can't control and instead chooses to focus their energy on the things they can control.

“There is no good or bad, just perception - and perception is what we can control,” Witten shared. “This also helps us manage our emotions, especially those that might prevent us from making good decisions.”

When it comes to difficult conversations or negotiations, it's important to accept the fact that you cannot control what the other person does or says. All you can control is how you receive the information and respond. This is where you take your power back and begin to manage the emotions that arise.

## **The Power of Humility**

Control really comes down to a fear of the unknown. As a result of this, many of us seek to know everything. In negotiation, the most critical part of the process is preparation, where the goal is to gain as much knowledge as possible. While this is undoubtedly valuable, there are benefits to not knowing everything about your opponent.

Not only will this naturally lead you to assess a situation objectively, but it also helps you to sharpen your real-time skills. The less information a negotiator has, the more they must rely on their skill-set in the moment. This also helps build reciprocal empathy - highlighting the fact that negotiations shouldn't be devoid of emotions, but rather incorporate strategic emotion management to drive better resolutions.

Follow [Doug Witten](#) on LinkedIn for more information on his work and expertise. To listen to the full episode, click [here](#).

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