

Never Split the Difference Summary – Chris Voss

16 MINUTE READ

[Never Split the Difference](#) (2016)

Negotiating As If Your Life Depended On It

by [Chris Voss](#)

Never Split the Difference shows you exactly how to get what you want and come out on top in any negotiation using simple negotiation tactics learned while dealing with terrorists, bank robbers and hostage situations - by veteran FBI negotiator, Chris Voss. ([274 pages](#))

[Paperback](#) | [Ebook](#) | [Audiobook](#)

Note: This **Never Split the Difference summary** is part of an ongoing project to summarise the [Best Communication Books](#) and [Best Business Books](#) of all time.

Contents

1. Never Split the Difference Review
2. Never Split the Difference Summary
3. Chapter 1: The New Rules
4. Chapter 2: Be a Mirror
5. Chapter 3: Don't Feel Their Pain, Label It
6. Chapter 4: Beware "Yes" – Master "No"
7. Chapter 5: Trigger The Two Words That Immediately Transform Any Negotiation
8. Chapter 6: Bend Their Reality
9. Chapter 7: Create the Illusion of Control
10. Chapter 8: Guarantee Execution

- 11. Chapter 9: Bargain Hard**
- 12. Chapter 10: Find The Black Swan**
- 13. Appendix: Prepare a Negotiation One Sheet**
- 14. Never Split the Difference Contents**
- 15. Never Split the Difference FAQs**
- 16. Why Should You Never Split the Difference?**
- 17. What Is the Black Swan In Never Split the Difference?**
- 18. Best Never Split the Difference Quotes**
- 19. Never Split the Difference PDF Summary**
- 20. Read More: 5 Books Like Never Split the Difference**
- 21. Wish There Was a Faster/Easier Way?**

Never Split the Difference Review

I'm a nice person. In saying that, I mean that I never truly feel that I win at negotiation.

Somehow, I always feel that I've settled.

And negotiations are everywhere. They are part of daily life.

From negotiating a satellite television bill to buying a large ticket item, you can't avoid negotiating.

Never Split the Difference by Chris Voss teased me with the idea that I could remain a nice person and stop giving up what is important to me when making a deal.

And it turns out that being a nice person helps you negotiate.

Voss lays out a simple way to understand others and take control of a negotiation so that you win.

Not only do you win, the other person feels that they are the winner too.

And you don't have to wait to apply these golden tactics to a high-profile hostage situation — even though that is where they were developed. You can use them in your everyday life.

I've now purchased two vehicles at the price I wanted when I walked through the doors of the dealership. Did it work on every dealership I walked into? No. But in the end, by using these methods, I got a great deal.

Never Split the Difference Summary

Chapter 1: The New Rules

Old school negotiation tactics say to keep negotiation calm and without emotion.

But have you ever felt that bit of nervousness before you have to negotiate something?

It doesn't matter what it is—the salary for a new job, a raise, or the purchase price of a car.

There's a feeling associated with knowing that you have to negotiate with someone. Why does it matter so much?

Because you care about the outcome. You are emotionally attached to what happens. It matters to you.

While you may believe that hiding emotions and taking feelings out of negotiations are your best courses of action, Voss disagrees with this tactic. His years of experience taught him one thing:

You can't take emotions out of the equation.

Just as you can't separate the importance of the negotiation from the

person, you can't separate the person from their emotions.

Have you ever had dealings with a determined child? If you haven't, perhaps you've seen it happen in a grocery store, parking lot or at an event. The adult gets down on the child's level and tries to reason the child out of their emotions.

It never works.

Voss explains dealing with an upset toddler is the closest thing you'll ever experience to being taken hostage and dealing with terrorists. They don't care about your reasoning. All that matters is how they feel and what they want.

Instead of trying to work around the emotions, you must work with them. You have to use tactical empathy to gain the trust and acceptance of the person you are dealing with.

When you pay close attention to, accept and understand the other person's emotional attachment to the negotiation, you can use what you know to navigate a win.

Chapter 2: Be a Mirror

You are sitting in class and your mind wanders. The voice of your teacher is just background noise until she says your name.

"Are you listening to me?"

Listening seems like it should be easy. But as easily distracted humans who feel deep emotions and make connections to our experiences while someone is talking, listening is challenging. You may hear what someone is saying, but are you listening to what they are saying?

Think about the last time you felt like someone didn't hear what you were

saying.

What did you feel at that moment? At the best—you felt aggravated by having to repeat yourself. At the worst—your feelings cause you to close down and separate from the situation.

Have you ever had the feeling of not being heard? It probably felt like you were having a very bad time. Remember that feeling in every negotiation from now on.

In his role with the FBI, Voss discovered one of the best ways to avoid making people unheard is to become a mirror and reflect their emotions and needs back to them.

Professionals call it isopraxism. When you mirror what the other person is saying, you build a rapport with them. And building a rapport builds trust.

But wait! Don't go out and start simply repeating back what is said to you. You have to take the time to practice being a mirror. It involves more than simply repeating.

Voss recommends a five-step listening technique:

1. Use a calm and quiet voice;
2. Start with saying "Sorry";
3. Repeat the last three words the other person said;
4. Give the other person time to respond; and
5. Repeat the process.

This mirror work creates an instant connection with your opponent and opens the doors to negotiation.

Chapter 3: Don't Feel Their Pain, Label It

Voss's exceptional career revealed one thing to him: The power

of labeling.

Labeling recognizes the feelings underneath actions. It puts a total focus on the why.

Sure, you could say to someone, "I understand you are feeling upset." But that is not going to get you anywhere.

Your goal is to keep your opponent thinking about themselves. You want them to think about their emotions, their wants and their needs. You want to help your opponent uncover details about themselves to give you the influence you need.

Have you ever had a bad meal at a restaurant?

You might have tried to explain how unhappy you were, only to be met with an upset manager that got more and more upset as you tried to explain your position.

The two parties are on opposite sides and unable to find any connection. You know that the manager is upset, but so are you.

The situation could be easily smoothed over by labeling.

"You are upset because you take great pride in this restraint."

No judgment—only understanding. When you recognize and label the emotions, you take the first step to helping your opponent move towards a positive way to handle the situation.

Recognizing the manager's response as coming from a place of pride allows you to diffuse the indignation. By labeling and keeping the focus on his problem, you can then walk with him towards a solution.

Chapter 4: Beware "Yes" – Master "No"

Imagine that you've come to a roaring river with a beautiful gift on the other side. But the river is the kind you see in whitewater rafting adventures—ragged boulders sticking up out of a swirling storm of water.

There is no way to safely get across.

You are told that everything you could ever want in life is across the river. Does that change your mind about crossing it?

Of course not.

The harder you are pushed to cross the river, the more you resist. Again and again, your answer is "No!"

Voss says the "no" actually opens up the door for negotiations.

What? Isn't the goal to hear "yes" to your demands?

Think back to that screaming child in the grocery store. The child wants a cookie. Mom, tired of the looks she is getting, gives in and buys the cookie under the agreement that the child will wait until they get home to eat it. The child falls asleep in the car, and Mom eats the cookie.

The "yes" was not a win. It was counterfeit. It allowed for two things: a way to break free from being held hostage through an escape route and a reflexive response that provides a temporary solution that will dissolve once the situation is improved.

A "yes" answer early in a negotiation can quickly be followed by being lied to, ghosted or manipulated.

But a "no" answer allows you to figure out the true needs of the other person. You can meet those needs with your negotiation so that they are invested in your solution.

Chapter 5: Trigger The Two Words That Immediately

Transform Any Negotiation

There are two words in any negotiation that are more important than "yes" and "no."

When you get that first "no," you get an understanding of how you may be able to move towards "yes."

But you need a bridge.

"That's right."

Your bridge is simply coming together in agreement on something.

Now, you could say a myriad of things where your opponent will feel the need to say, "You're right." Yet, that doesn't draw you together on equal ground. You are facing off still with one person right and the other simply acknowledging it.

Something about "that's right" puts you both standing side-by-side looking for the solution together.

You continue to take yourself out of the equation and put the focus on your opponent and find a solution to your shared problem. It's no longer just their problem—it is the problem of both of you.

How do you get to the "that's right" point?

It's a simple process when you follow Voss's suggestions.

Start by adopting a late-night FM DJ voice. Think of a calm and collected way of speaking as your goal. Your tone of voice creates the tone for the negotiations.

Begin by taking a moment to understand your opponent's emotions. Mirror their conversation.

Label the emotions and create a summary that is correct in their eyes—regardless of if you think it is correct.

When they reach the “that’s right” point, they are open to you helping them through the situation.

They are almost ready to make a deal with you.

Chapter 6: Bend Their Reality

Still not sure you can make it happen?

One of the best things you can do sounds a bit like magic, but it isn’t.

You need to bend reality.

It’s a lot easier than it seems.

Voss offers two options for bending reality: setting deadlines and being fair.

Setting a deadline makes your opponent feel that they must act quickly or they will lose something. It works with their loss aversion to create pressure. The deadline can be completely made up, and it usually can’t technically be enforced. But it creates one thing: urgency.

But keep in mind, just like the cut-off times you create, others will use the same tactic. If you are feeling pressured to make a deal, slow down and take your time. The deadlines thrown at you are always flexible.

From the time we were children on the playground, we focus on whether or not a situation is fair. The idea of an arrangement being “unfair” will almost certainly shut it down.

But how do you build the idea that a deal is fair?

If you tell someone you are being fair, they immediately get suspicious.

To build a feeling of fairness, you have to understand the emotions of the other person, label them and mirror them. By being genuine and sympathetic, you build the idea of fairness.

Chapter 7: Create the Illusion of Control

You have all the tools to be invincible now, right?

Not quite. There will always be another brick wall popping up in front of you.

You keep trying to convince the wall to move.

But it's a wall. They don't move on their own.

Your eyes are simply set on getting around the wall. But that's not doing you any good—you can't jump the wall. Running into it over and over only leaves you bruised and battered.

You can't move forward with your negotiations until you look at the person's face. But there is a wall in the way.

To take down a wall, you have to start by removing a brick. The first brick is one-word-answer questions.

You may feel that you are showing interest in the other person. You're trying to understand their needs.

But what you are really doing is creating a dynamic obstruction. You are giving up your control.

Yes and no questions make your counterparts feel like they are being beaten up. They have nothing to do with having a conversation. And even if they don't know it, people feel that all you are doing is driving towards a

quick ending.

To get the other person to help you take down the brick wall, you must begin asking open-ended questions.

These questions require the other person to actively look for the answers. They have to think about what you are asking. This gives you the ability to work together for a positive outcome.

Say that you have a really good friend in the hospital. They don't want to be there. Regardless of the doctor's recommendation, your friend just wants to leave.

You can't just say "no" to them. Arguing only makes your friend more resolved to leave.

Asking if the doctor said it was okay to leave will get a "no" response. Your friend just becomes more resolved to leave. It's the only solution they see.

By taking down the first brick and asking open-ended questions, you take back control of how the negotiation progresses. You can understand, acknowledge and label your friend's feelings. They can think about the what or the how behind their emotions. Together you can find a solution to the problem.

Chapter 8: Guarantee Execution

Professor Albert Mehrabian's 7-36-55 percent rule reveals that:

- 7% of what someone says is verbal;
- 38% of what someone says in the tone of voice;
- 55% of what someone says in their body language and facial expressions; and
- "Yes" is a confirmation that only sometimes means that your deal will happen.

If you think about it, “yes” only means that the other person has agreed. It may not be a true agreement with the plan of following through.

To create a guaranteed execution, you need to learn to use the word “how.”

How allows you to concentrate on creating a map to the plan’s execution.

It also allows you to gauge whether or not your opponent is operating under the Pinocchio Effect.

Harvard Business School professor Deepak Malhotra found that people not telling the truth to use more words than necessary.

The more liars lie, the more words they use. They use complex sentences and tend to drag things out as much as possible.

To get past the place where someone isn’t truly dedicated to their “yes,” use this simple technique: The Rule of Three.

All you need to do is get them to verbally agree three times.

The first time they agree counts as the first agreement.

Next, you should label or summarize their agreement so that they agree with it again. The goal is to get a “that’s right.”

Then you ask them how you both can get there or what you both can do to make it happen. This creates a promise of action that moves you forward to the finish line.

Chapter 9: Bargain Hard

It sounds nice—partners in finding a solution to the problem. But it isn’t practical to take it to heart.

Mike Tyson once said that everyone has a positive ending in mind until they are punched in the face.

To avoid being punched in the face, you have to stay in control of the negotiation. Start by understanding the negotiation style of your opponent.

There are three types of negotiators:

1. **Accommodators love to form a connection with you.** They trade information and work hard to find a win-win for you both. They generally love to talk and aren't prepared to negotiate. They tend to treat you the same way you treat them. Think of the golden rule when negotiating with them. If they get quiet, you may have to work harder.
2. **Assertive negotiators are in a hurry.** Time is money, and they get things done. Their attitude says that they don't mess around. Respect is highly valuable to an assertive person. It is incredibly important that they are heard and understood. They will speak and make big gestures just to fill up the silence. You must work hard to keep them feeling that they are in control.
3. **Analysts are detailed.** They come to the negotiation with a plan. They like to take the time to get every detail nailed down. You shouldn't surprise an analyst with unexpected situations. They are super sensitive to being treated fairly and will be skeptical of your motives. They like plenty of silence to figure out what is going on.

You have to adjust your negotiating to the person you are dealing with. Understand how they like to negotiate and work with their basic needs to control the negotiation. This gives you real leverage in any negotiation.

Voss recommends the Ackerman Model for negotiating a price deal with any type of negotiator. You simply:

1. Set your final number for the purchase of something;

2. Make your first offer at 65% of the main goal;
3. Calculate three raises of 85%, 95% and 100% of your main goal;
4. Use empathy to get them on your side. You want them to say "no" to get them to counter before you increase your offer;
5. Use precise numbers that are not rounded so that they know you aren't making up numbers; and
6. Ask for a non-monetary item that you don't want so that they think you are at your limit.

Chapter 10: Find The Black Swan

In the 17th century, people in London could not understand that a black swan could exist. They'd never seen anything except for a white swan. They began to refer to impossible things as black swans.

Have you ever negotiated something and walked away feeling that the entire process was insane?

We've all felt that way. And most all of us have blamed the other person for being unstable.

But often, the other person isn't to blame. The black swans are.

In negotiation, black swans are the often unrelated surprise gifts you can't easily see during a negotiation.

The crazy person on the other side of your insane negotiation is simply:

- Working with the wrong data;
- Frozen by factors you don't know about; or
- Hiding an interest that matters to the negotiation

Review everything you hear from the other person and ask plenty of open-ended questions. Keep in mind that when someone is acting "crazy," they probably aren't. They simply have a sincere desire that you don't

understand. Once you notice the behavior, take the time to look for bad information, constraints and hidden desires.

While you may feel that black swans are roadblocks, Voss explains that they can be leverage multipliers if you can figure them out.

Black swans fall into three categories:

1. Positive leverage ones allow you to give someone something they want or need;
2. Negative leverage ones can hurt someone; and
3. Normative leverage black swans just need to be out in the open.

The only way to uncover the black swans is to truly look at things through your opponent's eyes.

For example, you are working with a contractor who is steadfast in doing things a certain way. To the point of being fanatical about it.

The black swan in this situation is that the contractor has seen the destruction of a home due to the combination of a natural disaster and poor construction.

If you don't take the time to find out the "why" behind the determination, you will only be left feeling that the contractor is unreasonable. One of the best ways to do this is in person. Face-to-face conversations can reveal a lot through both verbal and nonverbal clues.

Appendix: Prepare a Negotiation One Sheet

Voss includes an appendix with an explanation of how to create a quick one sheet summary for negotiations. You can use the page to work through your plan of action before a negotiation.

Planning makes all the difference. You want to be prepared, but you don't

want to seem as if you are reading from a script. Know your key points but keep your conversation natural.

There are five sections to a one sheet.

The first section involves setting your goal. Write down a specific goal that represents the best-case scenario. This is how you ideally want your negotiations to turn out.

Along with your goal, make a list that includes your:

- Final amount;
- How you plan to get to your goal; and
- The answers to potential arguments.

The second section is your summary of the known facts. It could be a recap or what brought everyone to the table. You need to be able to explain a few details to find common ground with the other party.

Answer the following questions:

- Why are you there?
- What do you want?
- What does the other person want?
- Why do they want that?

The third section is a label and accusation audit. Include three to five labels that you can use to perform an accusation audit. This allows you to be proactive if the other person begins making accusations about the way you are treating them.

Craft a few fill-in-the-blank sentences that you could use to label their feelings and diffuse the situation. Examples include:

- It seems like _____ is very important to you.

- It seems like you are reluctant to _____.
- It seems like you really want _____.

The fourth section is where you identify the potential deal killers. You know that you must figure out the motivations of your opponent. By preparing a few questions to reveal the black swans, you save yourself time and frustration.

Consider asking:

- What are we trying to accomplish?
- What is your main concern?
- Why do you feel that way?
- What happens if you don't do anything?
- How do you want to move forward?

The fifth section includes a list of non-monetary terms that you can make a part of the negotiations. Many people make money the main priority. And numbers on paper are intimidating. By making an effective concession, you don't lose anything, but you make the other party feel that they are gaining something.

Ask yourself:

- What can you ask for that brings value to the table without costing the other person hard cash?
- What types of leverage can you apply to tip the scales in your direction?
- What can they do for you without feeling pressured?

Never Split the Difference Contents

***Never Split the Difference* has 10 main chapters...**

1. **The New Rules:** How to Become the Smartest Person ... In Any Room

2. **Be a Mirror:** How to Quickly Establish Rapport
3. **Don't Feel Their Pain, Label It:** How to Create Trust With Tactical Empathy
4. **Beware "Yes" — Master "No":** How to Generate Momentum and Make It Safe to Reveal the Real Stakes
5. **Trigger the Two Words That Immediately Transform Any Negotiation:** How to Gain The Permission to Persuade
6. **Bend Their Reality:** How to Shape What Is Fair
7. **Create the Illusion of Control:** How to Calibrate Questions to Transform Conflict Into Collaboration
8. **Guarantee Execution:** How to Spot the Liars and Ensure Follow-Through From Everyone Else
9. **Bargain Hard:** How to Get Your Price
10. **Find the Black Swan:** How to Create Breakthroughs by Revealing the Unknown Unknowns

Never Split the Difference FAQs

Why Should You Never Split the Difference?

You should never split the difference because there is no such thing as a win-win situation. When you negotiate, your goal is to get what you want. Compromise doesn't meet your needs or the needs of the person you are negotiating with. By taking the time to understand your opponent's position, you can guide them to a deal that meets your expectations without having to give up your goal.

What Is the Black Swan In Never Split the Difference?

The Black Swan in Never Split the Difference is the unseen factor that is influencing the decision-making ability of your opponent. It can be a misunderstanding, something you don't know or a hidden motivation. You must uncover the black swan to move forward in a negotiation that feels

out of control.

Best Never Split the Difference Quotes

These Never Split the Difference quotes come from **The Art of Living's** ever-growing central library of thoughts, anecdotes, notes, and [inspirational quotes](#).

"He who has learned to disagree without being disagreeable has discovered the most valuable secret of negotiation."

- [Chris Voss](#), Never Split the Difference

"Conflict brings out truth, creativity, and resolution."

- [Chris Voss](#), Never Split the Difference

"Negotiate in their world. Persuasion is not about how bright or smooth or forceful you are. It's about the other party convincing themselves that the solution you want is their own idea. So don't beat them with logic or brute force. Ask them questions that open paths to your goals. It's not about you."

- [Chris Voss](#), Never Split the Difference

"If you approach a negotiation thinking the other guy thinks like you, you are wrong. That's not empathy, that's a projection."

- [Chris Voss](#), Never Split the Difference

"The beauty of empathy is that it doesn't demand that you agree with the other person's ideas."

- [Chris Voss](#), Never Split the Difference

"Hope is not a strategy."

- [Chris Voss](#), Never Split the Difference

"Negotiation is not an act of battle; it's a process of discovery. The goal is to uncover as much information as possible."

- [Chris Voss](#), Never Split the Difference

"Mirrors work magic. Repeat the last three words (or the critical one to three words) of what someone has just said. We fear what's different and are drawn to what's similar. Mirroring is the art of insinuating similarity, which facilitates bonding. Use mirrors to encourage the other side to empathize and bond with you, keep people talking, buy your side time to regroup, and encourage your counterparts to reveal their strategy."

- [Chris Voss](#), Never Split the Difference

"The best way to deal with negativity is to observe it, without reaction and without judgment. Then consciously label each negative feeling and replace it with positive, compassionate, and solution-based thoughts."

- [Chris Voss](#), Never Split the Difference

"This is listening as a martial art, balancing the subtle behaviors of emotional intelligence and the assertive skills of influence, to gain access to the mind of another person. Contrary to popular opinion, listening is not a passive activity. It is the most active thing you can do."

- [Chris Voss](#), Never Split the Difference

Never Split the Difference PDF Summary

Want to save this Never Split the Difference summary for later?

Click the link below to get this whole summary as a handy FREE PDF...

[Get the latest FREE Never Split the Difference PDF Summary →](#)

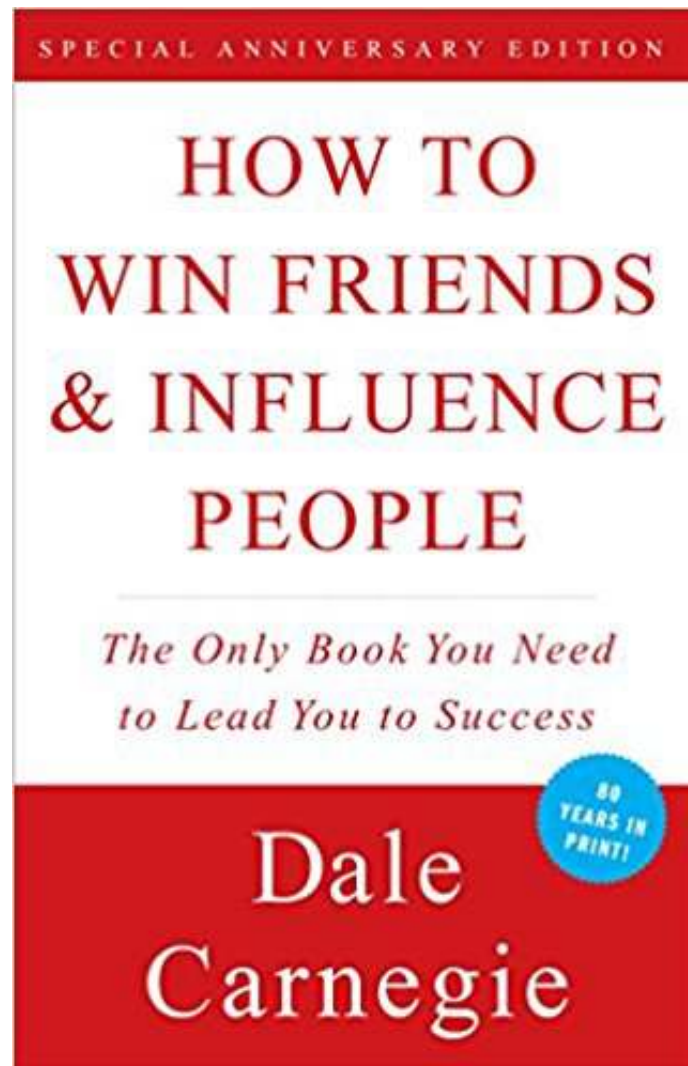
Note: Direct link to PDF. No email required.

Read More: 5 Books Like Never Split the Difference

Enjoyed this Never Split the Difference summary? You might enjoy the rest of the books on these lists of the [Best Communication Books](#) and [Best Business Books](#) of all time.

And in the meantime...

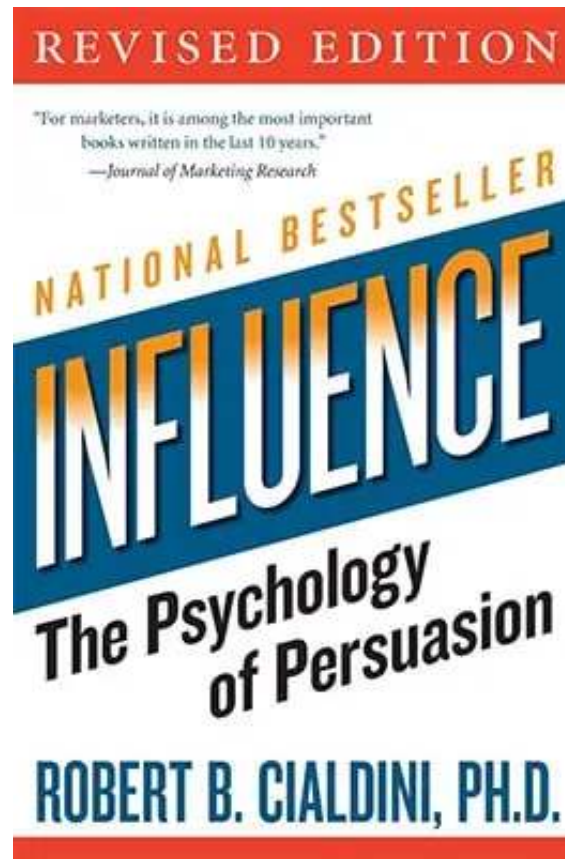
Here are 5 top books like Never Split the Difference...



1. [How to Win Friends and Influence People](#) - [Dale Carnegie](#) ([FREE Summary](#))

How to Win Friends and Influence People is THE classic guide to greatly improving effectiveness and efficiency by mastering the ability to work with and through the people around you - by self-improvement guru, Dale Carnegie.

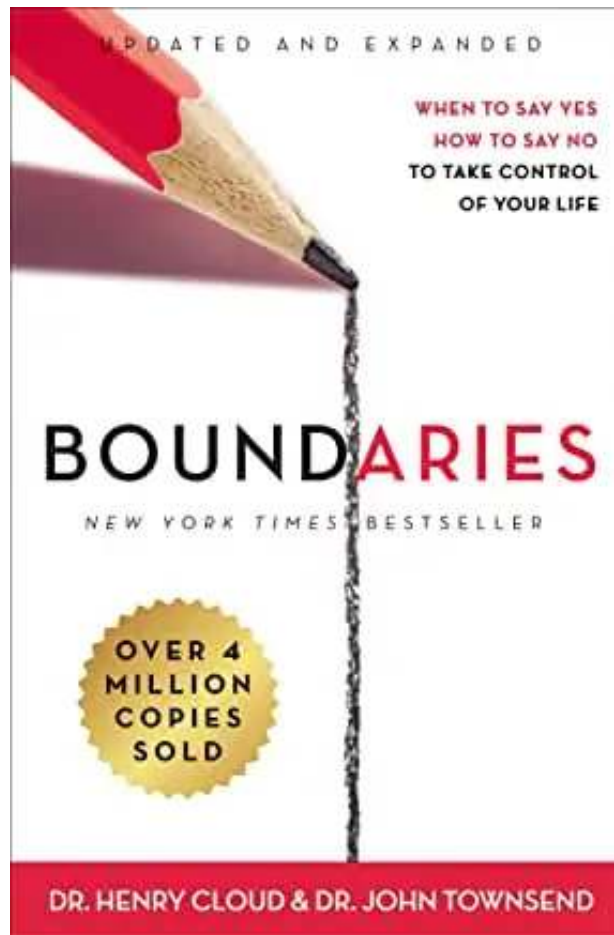
Published 1936 // 288 pages // Rated 4.2 over 767,200 reviews [on Goodreads](#)



2. [Influence](#) - Robert B. Cialdini

The Psychology of Persuasion

Published 1984 // 320 pages // Rated 4.2 over 118,700 reviews [on Goodreads](#)



4. [Boundaries](#) - Henry Cloud

When to Say Yes, How to Say No to Take Control of Your Life

Boundaries is a landmark book that has helped over 4 million people understand boundaries, where they are lacking in setting them, and how to confidently establish them. — by New York Times bestselling American Christian self-help author Dr. Henry Cloud. If you're exhausted from doing everything for everyone and need help breaking the loop, this book is for you.

Published 1992 // 314 pages // Rated 4.2 over 62,100 reviews [on Goodreads](#)

Wish There Was a Faster/Easier Way?

Whenever you're ready, here are four ways I can help you be more productive, find more balance and live life more on purpose...

1. **Curious? Discover how productive you really are...** Take this free, 2-minute assessment to unlock your PQ and discover the top 25 habits you need to get big things done. [Take the 2-minute quiz →](#)
2. **Overwhelmed? Get a free chapter of my book...** Let me show you how to beat procrastination, permanently, with this free sneak peek inside **TAoL**'s ultimate productivity primer. [Download your free chapter →](#)
3. **Stuck? Grab a 90-Day TRACKTION Planner...** Get the tool thousands trust to help them take control of their time, master their habits and hit goals in every part of their lives. [Order your 90-day planner →](#)
4. **Burned out? Join the TRACKTION Community...** Take the 6-week masterclass, get weekly group coaching, find accountability partners and connect with like-minded self-starters. [Get started FREE →](#)

[Lillian Teague](#)

I naturally fell into my 20 year writing career through my love of words and knowledge. I've been blessed to share what I've learned with digital and print readers around the world. To find me, just follow the trail of tea and good books. (Or check out my [LinkedIn](#)).