



Creating Win-Win Outcomes

Adopting a win-win mindset will turbocharge your collaborative efforts. It is the only sustainable way to build and maintain good partnerships and relationships when you understand that the only real win in the long term is if we all win together.

The orientation we're most familiar with is win-lose. Businesses compete for market share by outdoing each other. Leaders tend to compete with others by outdoing others around them. This win-lose mindset was historically a naturally advantageous orientation when resources were scarce: e.g., food, money, or power.

However, when a problem or opportunity must be addressed by multiple stakeholders, a win-lose mindset often hobbles success, causing insufficient trust, vulnerability, and transparency for collaborative problem solving to succeed. Fortunately, inviting a diverse group to weigh in creates a multiplier effect: Instead of $A + B = C$, you get $A + B = F$. We bring our creativity together, creating a bigger pie or something other than pie altogether.

Stephen Covey's widely supported definition of a win-win mindset from *The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People* is:

"Win-win sees life as a cooperative arena, not a competitive one. Win-win is a frame of mind and heart that constantly seeks mutual benefit in all human interactions. Win-win means agreements or solutions are mutually beneficial and satisfying."

Below are ways to cultivate a win-win mindset:

- 1. Take the time to assess and record your values.** If you don't know what's important to you, you can't consistently identify what your own win might be in collaborative settings. It's hard to live your values if they are not clear and visible to you regularly, even daily.
- 2. Balance courage and consideration.** When you are clear about what you need and want, it can take courage to state it cleanly, without blame or judgment. At the same time, it takes positive regard for others to allow them the same freedom and space to state their own needs and wants. When both courage and consideration are high, a win-win solution is more likely.
- 3. Don't believe everything you think.** We all have an inner critic and often other fearful voices inside that assure us that "there isn't enough" or "I'm not enough." As you become aware of these automatic thoughts, you can choose new thoughts. Experiment with viewing the world through an abundance lens instead of an unquestioned scarcity assumption. Especially in the world of ideas, the more ideas are shared, the more everyone has.
- 4. Prioritize long-term relationships over short-term comfort.** Achieving win-win solutions can take time and patience. You may have to stay in a dialogue longer than you're comfortable doing so. You may have to stay in a state of uncertainty and fog longer than you would like. But when you hold fast to an intention to preserve and grow a relationship instead of checking the box that the decision has been made, these difficulties are worth enduring.



WORKSHEET FOR CREATING WIN-WIN OUTCOMES

Once you've gotten comfortable acting from a win-win mindset, there are some concrete steps you can take to create win-wins. The trickiest part is investigating and narrowing the options that you and your stakeholders have identified.

See the worksheet template called *[Discovering Win-Win Outcomes](#)*.