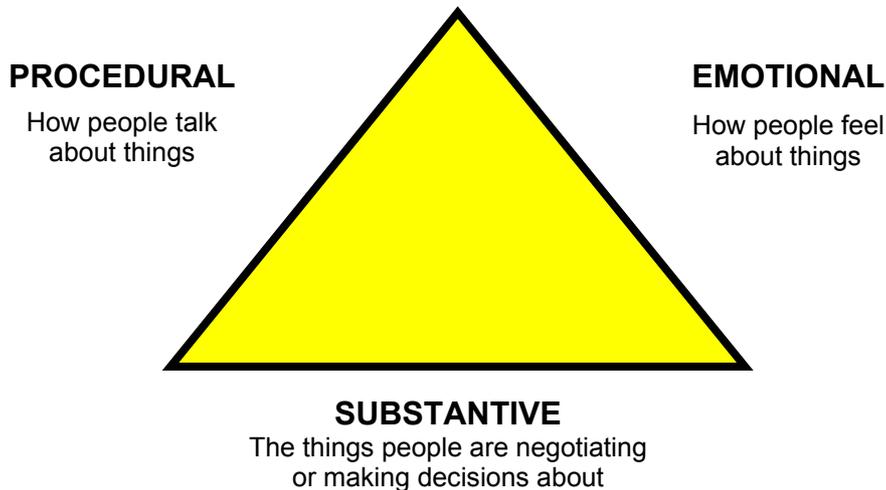


# THE SATISFACTION TRIANGLE

## A Simple Measure for Negotiations and Decision Making

When setting up negotiations or decision making processes people have three interdependent needs that must be carefully considered in order to achieve agreements and decisions that will last. These three needs are represented in the following diagram termed the Satisfaction Triangle.



### Key Points:

#### Procedural Needs are about:

- the opportunity to have a "fair go"
- the opportunity to put forward own point of view
- the opportunity to both listen and be listened to
- having confidence in information, protocols and meetings.

#### Emotional Needs are about:

- personal and emotional aspects people bring to the negotiating table
- how people feel about what is being negotiated for
- how people feel about themselves during and after the negotiations.

#### Substantive Needs:

- the material things and issues people are negotiating about
- can be both tangible, e.g. money, time, rights, possessions; or intangible, e.g. respect, consideration. People are very often just focused on **what** they need to negotiate and the **how** of how to negotiate isn't seen as really that important.

People may often say things like “We’ve got to get some runs on the board”, “We’ve got to deliver some outcomes”, “We need to be seen to be doing something”. This places an immense amount of pressure on people to get down to business and reach agreements. Yet if people’s emotional and procedural needs aren’t also considered and dealt with, agreements will break down, or in many instances won’t be achieved. Taking time to get the process right and to consider the emotional impact is a sensible use of time and resources.

Getting agreements or outcomes is reasonably easy – getting them to last and to work is the real trick. And getting them to last and work depends on addressing people’s substantive **and** emotional **and** procedural needs.

## **Procedural Issues**

The procedures and protocols for a negotiation or decision making process will affect how those involved feel about the process and how they see the issues being considered.

### **Case History**

An organization is tasked with developing a fact sheet about a proposed negotiation process. They decide the information is on eleven other fact sheets and that it is too much work to develop one fact sheet that summarises the information. They put the information on the web but when asked to mail it out to people send all eleven fact sheets.

Whose needs is this organization considering?

- the need of people who don’t have internet access;
- the need of people who want the information accessible in one simple easy to read fact sheet;
- the need of people to feel they are being dealt with openly and transparently;
- the need of the organization to save work in the short term.

It is highly likely that the organization is generating a climate of mistrust by making it hard for people to get information. The process they have adopted for getting information to people generates a strong emotional response – people feel the organization is unfair, deceitful, making it hard for them and they are unlikely to trust any substantive outcomes produced or recommended by the organisation.

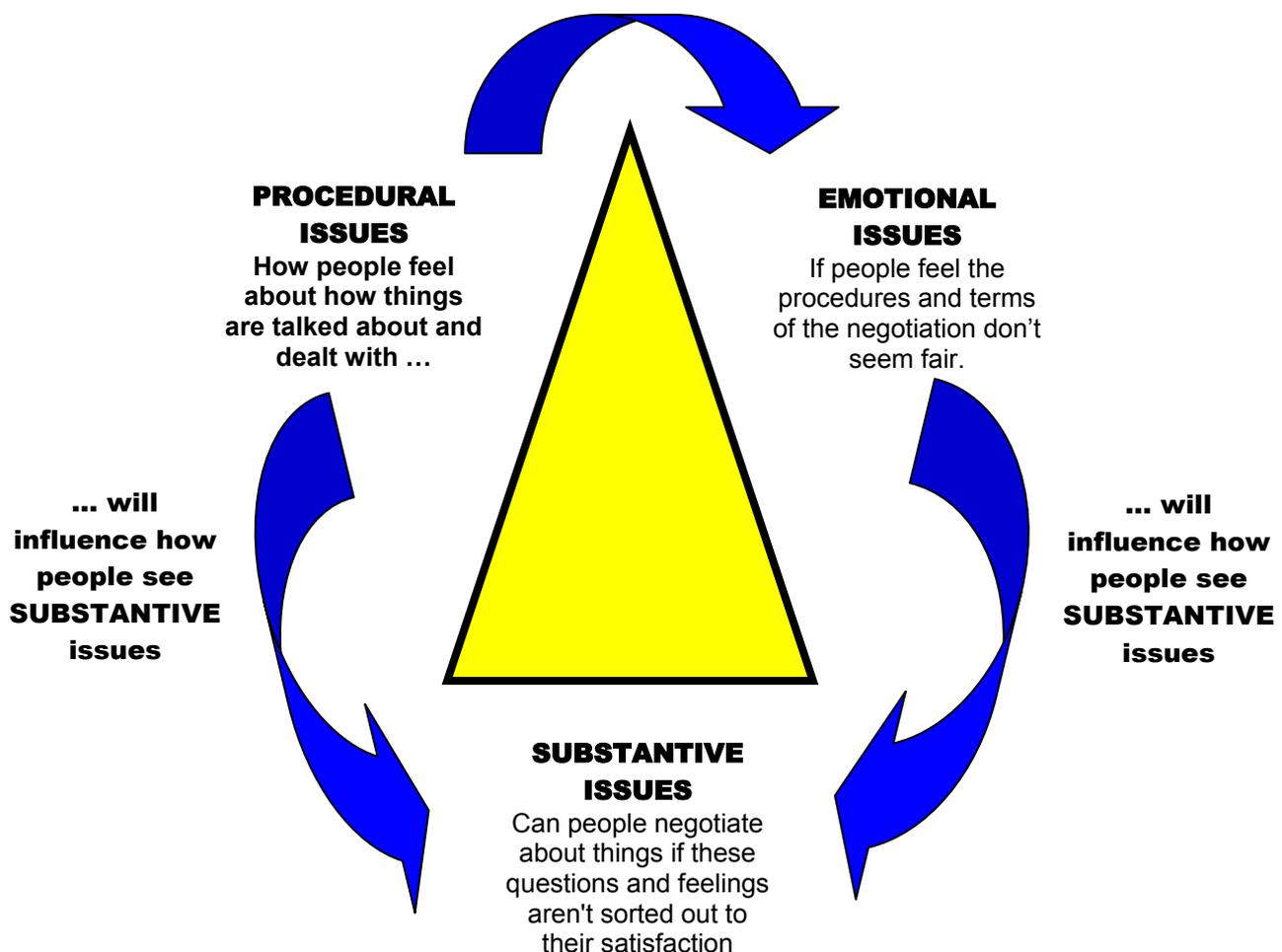
The types of concerns about process and procedure that might people have, include:

- Is there adequate preparation time?
- Who determines the time frames?
- Who sets the agenda?

- Is all the information available to everyone at the same time?
- Are all groups resourced to participate?
- Are appropriate people at the table? - your group and other groups?
- Where are the meetings to be held, e.g. on country or at the company's offices – what impacts might this have?
- If representatives are used is there enough time to allow them to consult with those they represent?

All these questions and more will be considered by people. They all lead to a sense of whether the process is fair or not. Reliable protocols and rules amongst all the parties are necessary for people to feel confident that things are really fair and that they will be treated fairly and that they can be confident in the results of the negotiation or decision-making process.

**Procedural issues produce EMOTIONAL issues**



## Emotional Issues

Everything that happens in a negotiation or a decision making process communicates messages to everyone involved. It may also communicate unintended messages and this will have consequences for the substantive negotiations.

### Case History

Lawyer Y was responsible for heading up a legal team that successfully opposed Group X's rights and interests. A year later Group X is in negotiation with Group B about a completely unrelated matter. Group B employ Lawyer Y to negotiate with Group X on their behalf. Group X decide not to negotiate.

How was Group X feeling?

- insulted that Group B had chosen Lawyer Y?
- angry that Group B were so insensitive?
- doubtful that the negotiations would be in good faith?

People's emotional concerns and personal feelings about the things being discussed in negotiations will affect how they see issues of procedural fairness and accountability, and how they approach the issues being negotiated.

The range of emotional concerns that people may bring includes:

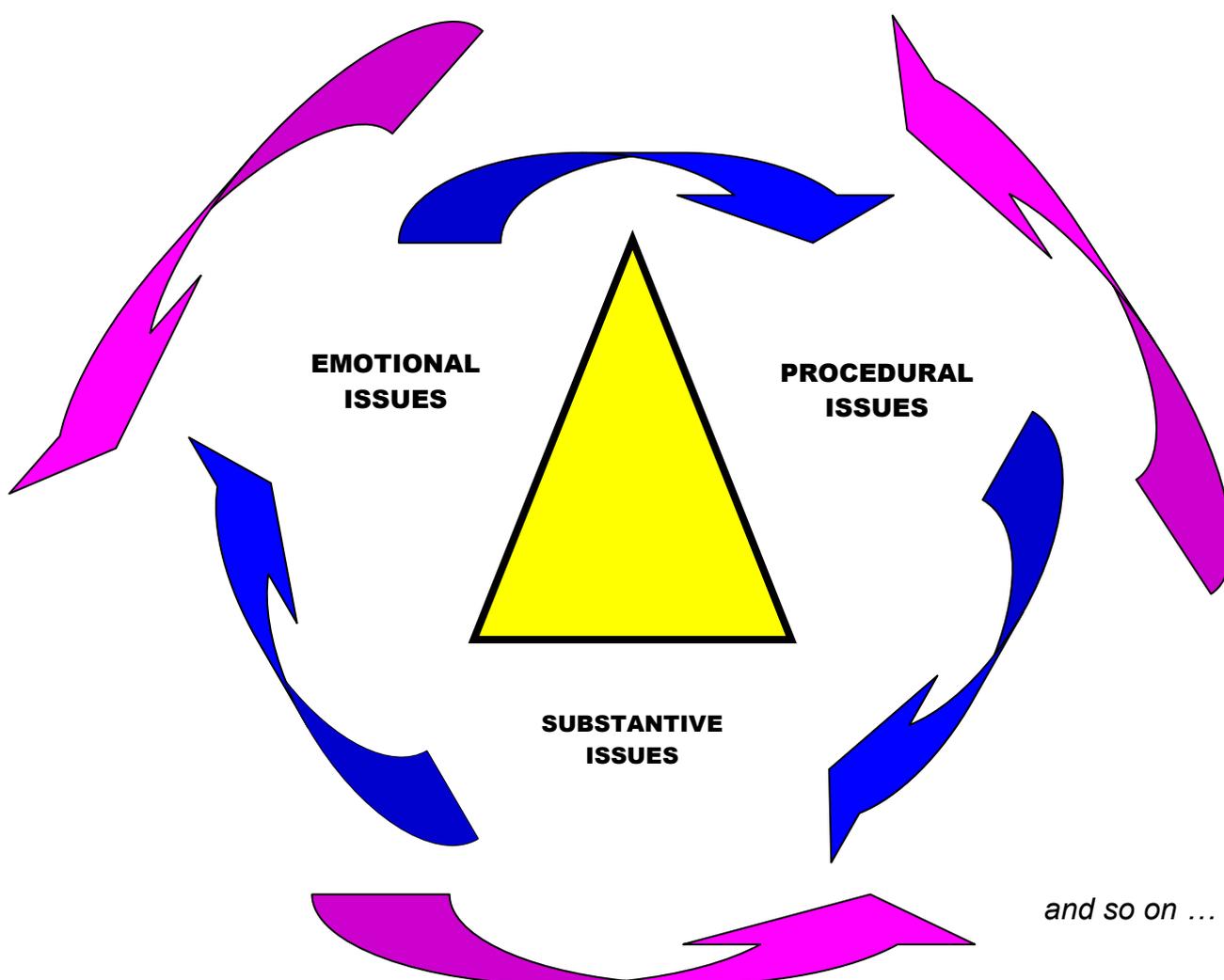
- Are the discussions honest and in good faith?
- Are people being recognised and respected
- Are other stakeholders trying to understand how each group or individual sees things
- Feelings about previous relationships and interactions.

Emotional issues are not useless baggage that hinders agreement making. They are a vital part of the substantive concerns being brought to the negotiating table. How they are dealt with communicates the level of respect and recognition accorded to the people involved.



## The Satisfaction Triangle is a on-going cycle

It is important to recognise that emotional, procedural and substantive issues continue to impact on and affect each other throughout the negotiation and decision-making process. Emotional issues will produce procedural concerns, how those procedural concerns are dealt with may alleviate or exacerbate people's initial emotional concerns, all of which will affect how they see the substantive negotiations. Likewise, procedural issues will continue to have ramifications throughout the process, particularly if people feel the process is lacking in transparency or fairness. If they feel this way then they are unlikely to feel that any substantive outcomes produced are fair. The implications of this for those involved in managing negotiation or decision-making processes is that there needs to be an opportunity to continually review and reflect upon the procedural and emotional issues that are raised by or affecting stakeholders. To get agreements that last all aspects of the Triangle, or rather all the needs that people bring to the table, must be managed and addressed.



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