

The-Extended-Mind-Part-3

Wed, 4/6 12:40PM 18:43

SUMMARY KEYWORDS

ideas, space, heads, physical, bargaining, people, thinking, terms, home turf, architects, thought, advantage, speak, negotiations, annie, process, possibilities, map, brains, offloading

SPEAKERS

Chris Casillas, Annie Murphy Paul



Chris Casillas 00:09

The space in which we bargain can, in some ways, be as determinative in terms of successful outcomes as the substance of proposals made by the parties during negotiations themselves. Whether it be our ability to look out onto a greenspace during negotiations, or the more at ease, we feel in a familiar environment, the right space can make all the difference in how successful we are at the bargaining table. In our third and final episode was science writer Annie Murphy Paul, where she discusses her book, *The Extended Mind*, join co-host Chris Casillas in considering the importance of our physical environment, while bargaining. Annie also discusses some of the science behind why bargaining models like the affinity model, or interest-based bargaining can be so successful in terms of their ability to harness some of our natural modes of thinking that involve both movement and working with objects. And helping us resist the urge to judge too quickly the creative ideas we can generate. We pick up the conversation as Annie and Chris transition to talking about the physical space in which we bargain. I want to, I want to move to, we've talked about this a little bit already, but kind of also thinking about the the physical space in which our thinking is occurring. And and this is an issue for us in the negotiation world as well as I kind of set the scene earlier, a lot of times you're in these kind of cramped, you know, conference rooms, sometimes there's not windows, sometimes it's you know, too hot, or too cold. And just kind of thinking about how how that space can positively or negatively kind of impact our thought process. And one of the, one of the concepts you talked about in the book, are, you know, the importance of taking these micro breaks or micro restorative opportunities. And I'm wondering if you could kind of speak to the broader issue of the importance of our physical space, as it impacts our thinking. And also kind of speak to that concept I just mentioned.



Annie Murphy Paul 02:26

Yeah, a couple of thoughts come to mind there, Chris. One is that at least the way I'm imagining it, these rooms in which these negotiate, negotiations go on... Sounds like they might not have huge windows letting in lots of natural light. Sometimes you're you feel a bit closed off from the outdoors. Is that is that the case?

C

Chris Casillas 02:44

Yeah, I think it can vary widely. You know, it just kind of depends on the particular day or the particular place that you're in. But certainly I've found myself in environments where you're kind of in the in the basement room without windows or small window or, you know, experiencing some of those, you know, sometimes you're in a great, you know, downtown, you know, big office building with a sweeping view of the city or something. But you know, other times, it's quite different.

A

Annie Murphy Paul 03:09

Yeah. Okay, well, I asked that because, you know, certainly if you're spending hours and hours in this interior space, however, it's designed, and focusing on the small details of a negotiation that's going to be very draining, you know, for anyone's attentional capacity. I can imagine that after hours and hours, one might feel kind of frazzled, or burnout or just not able to focus and one of the the fastest and easiest and most effective ways to sort of refill that attentional tank is to go outside, because the kind of information and stimuli that we encounter when we're outside in nature is really restorative to our to our brains and our bodies we, we respond to, again, it goes back to our evolutionary heritage, you know, we evolved in the outdoors and our perceptual faculties are really tuned to the kind of information that we encounter outside. So it's very easy for our brains to process, it doesn't take a lot of effort, it doesn't drain our capacities the way, you know, focusing on on small details or symbols would do so as much as possible if people can get outside to give their attention a break and to refill and restore their attention. That's a good idea. And if you even if you can't get outside, even just looking out the window, I mean, this is the research he referred to about micro restorative breaks, researchers have found that even just 40 seconds of looking outside at a green kind of setting kind of gives our attention a break and allows us to to restore and replenish ourselves, so that that's something we can forget to do as we go through our, you know, busy full days but it really it really is a very effective way of restoring our attention.

C

Chris Casillas 03:10

Yeah. You also kind of on this idea of space. So there was there was a piece and I, hopefully I'm not getting too granular into your book. But where you talk about kind of the the Home Team Advantage and the visitor and kind of thinking about that space. And, you know, this is an issue and in that comes up in our world in terms of kind of, you know, one of the issues the parties have to tackle is where are we going to meet to sit down to negotiate this and, and sometimes that's a pretty contentious, contentious question. But I'm wondering kind of what that, you know, if you could speak to that kind of Home Team Advantage, and kind of thinking about how that kind of impacts our thought processes and our abilities to kind of work on some of these complex problems?

A

Annie Murphy Paul 05:49

Yeah, so the Home Team Advantage is a concept advanced by psychologists obviously borrowed from the world of sports, that in the world of sports, it's been found that there is an advantage in terms of performance and rates of winning for teams when they're on their home

turf. And, and that's even you know, once you've factored out things like the fan, you know, the home team fans, and maybe some reps that are positively inclined to the home team, there's something about the space in which athletes are playing, that encourages them to perform better when they're when they're on their home turf. And that this turns out to be true, not just for athletes, but for people in workplace settings, as well that people think better when they're in a familiar space. And in a space because in a way, you're familiar space, that you have arranged structures, your thinking for you and takes off some of the the cognitive load. Certainly, when you're coming into a new space, there's a lot to take in, there's a lot that you're attending to, because it's all unfamiliar. So that's one advantage for the person who's, who's negotiating in their own space. The other advantage flows from the fact that people who are in their own space feel empowered because it's, it's their space, they feel like they belong, they belong there, the space belongs to them, they're in control. And all of that is effects very much how and how well, people are able to think and this all speaks to the fact that the human brain is just very sensitive to context, you know, the context where you are doing your thinking, really, really matters.

C

Chris Casillas 07:36

Yeah, and as you're talking about that, I'm wondering if if that is maybe one advantage of negotiating over these virtual platforms on Zoom, you know, people are at at home, where presumably they feel more comfortable and more familiar. Do you think do you see that as a possible advantage in that realm?

A

Annie Murphy Paul 07:56

That's super interesting. I mean, it's only in a an online format, that everyone is able to be on their home turf? Right? You know, I have I had not thought of that before. But I have heard from people that they find that meetings and gatherings online, are sometimes more democratic, because there's, it's just it sort of flattens the hierarchy, everybody is just another square in the grid, anyone can raise their digital hand, basically. And so all the cues that might lead say, a very dominant person to take the floor more than is their, their right, in an in person meeting that gets flattened out a little bit in, in an online setting. So there are some advantages, as much as I agree with you that it's a it's a diminished experience in the sense that the, the richness of the signals that we can exchange with each other is diminished when we're online, there may be some possible upsides to the online format, as well.

C

Chris Casillas 08:56

Let me let me move over to kind of this one of this other key areas you talked about in terms of kind of thinking with relationships and kind of that social piece of things and, and in particular, kind of integrating that, that work and those thoughts into the process of kind of generating ideas. Because in collective bargaining, we often have to face, you know, pretty challenging topics, and, and some complex systems that we have to try and sort out at the bargaining table. If you could imagine for a moment, you know, trying to come up with a new work schedule for a group that works, you know, 24/7 365 kind of schedule and thinking about all the pieces that go into that and, and whatnot. There's there's a lot of complexity and a lot of places that that discussion can break down because of that complexity. One of the one of the concepts

you talk about here is this idea of concept mapping and kind of offloading, you know, ideas and thoughts that were kind of maybe stuck in our head, but trying to kind of get into these more physical spaces to kind of, as I said, kind of offload some of that heavy lifting. So wondering if you could explain that and think about maybe how that might be integrated into our world of negotiations a bit.

A

Annie Murphy Paul 10:22

Yeah, yeah. So you know, in our, in our world, we, in our culture, we tend to valorize doing things in our heads, you know, we think that smart people, geniuses are able to, we admire people who can do things in their head, rather than writing it down, you know, or using reminders. But, in fact, it's, it's actually, we should actually be trying to get ideas and information out of our heads as much as possible. And that's true for a couple reasons. One is that it simply reduces, again, the sort of mental bandwidth, the mental resources that are being used up, just to keep all those things in mind, you know, and when we can put down that burden, and lay it all out and not have to remember, then we can, we have more bandwidth available for the higher cognitive processes of, you know, making connections and planning and imagining, and all these kinds of things that are inhibited when we're, we're we've got our hands full, or our heads full, just trying to sort of keep track of all the details. So the more we can get that stuff out on the physical space, whether that's a whiteboard, or you know, maybe one of those giant pads of paper or a bunch of post it notes. There are a couple other advantages that come with this cognitive offloading process where we're getting stuff out of our head and onto physical space. One is that, you know, again, we didn't evolve as organisms to think about symbolic or abstract concepts, we really evolved to do things like manipulate physical objects, and move our bodies through space and navigate through three dimensional landscapes. So as much as possible, when we can turn ideas and pieces of information into objects, we can manipulate, like post it notes, so we can move around or into a into a basically a landscape of ideas or information that we can maybe put up on like a big bulletin board or whiteboard, and then move our bodies around, that allows us to take advantage of all these embodied resources, like our spatial memory, for example, like remembering that this is over here. And that's over there. These are all resources that remain dormant when we're we keep all of that inside our own heads. And then finally, you know, putting all that information and all those ideas onto physical space, it allows us to interact with them in a different way, we get a little distance from them, because they're no longer ideas in our heads, they're out there in the world, we also are able to organize them into a map. You know, interestingly, neuroscience research shows that we we were such embodied creatures, and we're so embedded in our physical environments, that we actually, turns out that we actually treat ideas and information as if it were a landscape, the same brain structure that maps out our route through, you know, to the corner store is the same structure that we use to, to map out a complex set of ideas or information. So when we can reproduce that map, effectively that mental map, you know, in physical space, then we reap all the advantages of being able to see that it's in a stable form that isn't shifting, because it's in our heads, and we can share that map with other people. And it becomes a common reference point that is harder to achieve when you know that all those thoughts and pieces of information are sort of hidden away in someone's head. So it becomes a much more productive site of engagement when everyone is literally on the same page. In terms of an externalized set of set of information.

C

Chris Casillas 14:16

You can't you can't see the kind of metaphorical light bulb that just went off in my head here. But as you're as you're describing this, we we use this one of the models we use in bargaining is called the Affinity Model, which was developed by the Federal Mediation and Conciliation Service but it involves a critical part of it is involves physically kind of using sticky notes, to walk up to walls to put down ideas, that people have to solve some of the some of the bargaining problems they have and then people can kind of move the different ideas and connect them. And and I'm seeing now like, you know, kind of the connection to what you're talking about here in terms of why that can be such a productive process for folks. I don't know that they had that kind of cognitive psychology kind of informing that particular model, but it seems to be very much connected to me.

A

Annie Murphy Paul 15:15

Yeah, yeah, I would I totally, totally agree with that.

C

Chris Casillas 15:18

Yeah. Well, as part of that, as well, just one one other question on on kind of the issue of kind of generating new ideas, we also there's another model we use is Interest-Based Bargaining. It's called IBB, and part of that is about postponing judgment as long as possible, before we kind of center on some ideas, and I think you speak to that, that process as well, as like pushing things off as long as we can, in terms of judging, to allow ideas to form. So I wonder if you could take a minute to just speak to that as well.

A

Annie Murphy Paul 15:59

Sure, yeah, that was in a section that drew on research. That was done with architects and designers and artists and looked at how they tend to come up with new ideas. And it's, it's very interesting to to, you know, read these granular studies of how, say, an architect would come up with an idea for for a facade for a building or something, you know, it's, it's a very open ended, iterative kind of process, they, architects will often say, talk about a conversation between, between the eye and the hand, you know, it's like, it's not at all as if they formed the idea in their brains, and then dictate that to their hand, and then the hand executes it, it's actually this open ended, looping kind of process where they draw a mark. And that mark stimulates a thought and then they try and you know, they add another mark. And, and when you're engaged in this kind of open ended design process, the last thing you want to do is, is start making judgments you know, about what's in front of you, while it's still in process, you want to hold that off as long as possible and keep the possibilities open. And interestingly, very experienced architects, they often get their best ideas, their best new ideas, from riffing off their old drawings, it's like they're able to see possibilities in what they've, what they've created before. And newer, less, less experienced, or novice architects tend to start over each time, you know, but, but older, sorry, more well, older, but more experienced architects tend to know how to use older work or previous work as a springboard for something new. They're really good at seeing possibilities, nascent possibilities in what's in front of them.

C

Chris Casillas 17:58

Wonderful, wonderful. Well, thank you so much, Annie for taking the time to speak with us on the PERColator podcast today. I wish I could talk to you about this for the next five hours. And I know you're a busy person and we sincerely appreciate your your time. I've learned a tremendous amount and I hope all of our listeners will as well. So thank you very much.

A

Annie Murphy Paul 18:23

Oh, thank you, Chris. It was really fun to apply The Extended Mind to this new realm, it was really fun for me. Thanks so much.

C

Chris Casillas 18:30

Thank you.