

**Laura Kray** is the Warren E. and Carol Speiker Professor of Leadership at the Walter A. Haas School of Business, University of California at Berkeley. Professor Kray sat down with ExecEd to discuss her research and 'Power & Authenticity.

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**ExecEd:** We're going to be talking a lot about power today, okay? I wanted to start out by asking you if you could share some of the more recent research you've done on power and how ones power position affects performance.

**Laura Kray:** Sure. This is an exciting area of research for me, because what we've been studying is how people who may feel psychologically disadvantaged because of the role that they are assuming in a negotiation can overcome that disadvantage. To give you a concrete example, imagine a job candidate and a job recruiter. Most people would agree that irrespective of how many job offers that candidate has, this is a prototypical situation where the candidate may feel psychologically in the one down position.

What we find is that when the pressure is turned up in this situation it can lead people who are feeling like they are in the low power position, again irrespective of how many offers they have and what their alternatives are, what we are finding is that when you turn up the pressure in the situation by making it diagnostic of core abilities. If you go into the negotiation, you feel like how you perform in the situation fundamentally reveals something about your true core abilities as a negotiators, that that tends to trip up low power negotiators more than it otherwise would. It tends to give the high powered negotiator even more of an advantage when the pressure is on.

In our research, what we've done is we've explored how that disadvantage can be mitigated. Specifically what we do is we remind people before they go into these high stakes, high pressure situations to connect with their authentic self. What this means is to remind yourself of what your core values are, who you are as a person, what matter most to you in terms of your values, and doing so provides a buffer against the threat that can arise from being in a low power position.

**ExecEd:** There are actual techniques to sort of help you in these kinds of pressure cooker situations?

**Laura Kray:** That's right. We know that half the work in a negotiation takes place before you get to the bargaining table, so what we're doing is adding some techniques to the toolkit. Part of this is not just about expansive body posture and developing alternatives, all these great tools that already exist. What we're doing is helping people to realize that they are in the driver seat in terms of determining their own confidence and sense of preparedness in a negotiation. It really comes down to just reminding ourselves, affirming, our core values.