

# Positive Intentions

By Gayle North

*"Underlying every behavior is a positive intention."*

*"People always make the best choices they have available to them in their model of the world."*  
- NLP Presuppositions

If we adopt these ideas as operating principles as we interact with our children and other adults, we would reduce violence and empower ourselves to influence others much more effectively. As we separate an unwanted behavior from the positive intention behind it, we open up a whole new world of possible ways to satisfy the positive intention in a more acceptable, more satisfying way.

When we assume others have negative intentions an adversarial situation is set up making it nearly impossible to work together in a cooperative spirit in order to change the unwanted behavior or situation. In *"Heart of the Mind"* by Connirae and Steve Andreas, methods for improving relationships by keying on the positive intent of the "other" are discussed in a powerful and practical way.

## Finding the Positive Intention With Children

It is easy to label the behaviors of others, especially children, as mean or aggressive or even "bad." Children tend to push, shove, hit and yell when they don't get what they want. From the child's point of view, it may be the only way he/she can think of to get something. Our job as parents is to respect the positive intention, and offer better ways to achieve it. When a child is "misbehaving" – doing something that could possibly hurt himself, another, or abuse property:

- 1) Interrupt, limit or stop the unwanted behavior as quickly and calmly as possible.
- 2) Ask "What is it that you are trying to do?" "What is it that you want?"
- 3) Find a way to agree with the positive intention.
- 4) Help the child find other ways to achieve the positive intention by asking "How else could you accomplish that?" With young children, it can be useful to suggest possibilities for them to consider.

Using all four of these steps enables us to help a child find his or her positive intention and find another solution.

Three of the long term effects are:

- Children begin to become aware of their positive intentions, in contrast to being "aggressive" or "bad." This enhances a child's self esteem.
- Children eventually come to think of other children in the same way – that even when others do things they don't like, there was a good intention.
- The child learns to automatically think of alternative solutions using creative resources to solve problems.

## Finding the Positive Intention With Ourselves and Others

Adults have their own ways of reacting to stress. We all do things occasionally that we consider stupid or limiting. We may feel inadequate, or angry, or have other negative emotions that we

don't like. Self criticism is destructive and actually reinforces the unwanted behaviors and negative feelings. We usually try to "get rid" of these behaviors or feelings one way or another.

When we see others doing things that seem bizarre or dumb, we may think "If they only knew better." In contrast, when we assume our children and other adults have positive intentions for everything they do, it makes our job much easier – and makes it possible to maintain the relationship as we explore behaviors and make changes.

Rather than just "trying" to change, it is now possible to utilize new technologies such as the Neuro-linguistic Programming method called Six Step Reframing. The most important part of this method is that you begin by making this unusual assumption: *every behavior or feeling you have, no matter how bizarre or stupid it seems, has some useful and important positive intention or purpose.*

This idea often seems ridiculous to people at first, but it is a powerful assumption that makes positive change and inner healing possible. It helps us turn problems and limitations into assets and allies, and lays the foundation for easy behavioral change. This assumption also helps each of us gain greater rapport with all parts of ourselves – with our entire being.

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Gayle North offers Personal Coaching for Positive Change using recently developed empowerment technologies to clear mental and emotional blocks that keep people stuck in unhealthy habits and prevent them from performing at their highest potential in school, sports, relationships, work and finance. Call 406-837-1214 to learn how you can STOP SMOKING IN ONE HOUR and for coaching in person or by phone. [changeiseasy@montanasky.net](mailto:changeiseasy@montanasky.net) [www.PositiveChangeInstitute.com](http://www.PositiveChangeInstitute.com)