

Unconscious Positive Intentions

*“What we see and hear is what we think about. What we think about is what we feel.
What we feel influences our reactions. Reactions become habits and
it is our habits that determine our destiny.”*

Bob Gass

Beliefs are perhaps the most influential way we ‘filter’ our experience. A strongly-held belief creates a strong emotional state. What we are believing and the resulting emotional state tell us "what is important to us".

A strongly-held belief can become a self-fulfilling prophecy because thought creates reality. It's like my faithful servant doesn't want to make a liar out of me so it helps to prove that my belief is true by sorting for and creating examples of it in my life.

Over the course of our lives we can, and often do, change our beliefs. We do this based on new evidence, brought about from either experience or fresh data – our map of the world changes. For example, 1000 years ago everyone believed the world was flat; 100 years ago most people believed man would never walk on the moon; today we believe.....

NLP has modelled what successful people do with their thinking and has developed a series of Beliefs of Excellence or ‘presuppositions’. These are not ‘truths’ or ‘facts’, just examples of how some people choose to approach situations. Their purpose is to have the person feel more resourceful about themselves or the situation. Here is the test: if you ‘try on’ a particular belief to pre-suppose it was true, what difference does it make to you, how you feel, your choice of response?

One of the NLP Beliefs of Excellence is “Behind every behaviour there is an unconscious positive intention”. Here we are invited to consider what might be the benefit in the behaviour, what might it be doing for us or someone else?

This can be a useful ‘frame’ to hold when considering our own or someone else’s actions. Often it encourages us to be compassionate with ourselves or with others.

How we ‘frame’ something often impacts our experience. If we change the way we are framing something, our experience will be different. Imagine for a moment a picture of a seascape in a soft pale blue weathered frame; now consider how that same seascape would look if it was in a metallic purple frame with green dots on it! Quite different I suspect!

I was working with a client who wanted to give up smoking. She led a really busy life and had 3 small children. As we explored the positive intention for her of smoking, she discovered that what it actually did was give her 5 minutes out in the garden to have some peace and quiet. She believed that those 5 minutes made her more tolerant of her children’s constant demands and hence a better mother! We discussed what she could do to ensure that she gave herself 5 minutes every couple of hours so that she could keep the benefits she believed she got from smoking and was still able to kick the habit! I am delighted to say she found it easy to stop smoking after that.