

# YES! AND... CREATIVE GORILLA # 96

*If people are communicating a negative message, how might you help them reframe it?*

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## Facilitate Negative People to be Constructive...

*“Whatever people say or do, assume positive intent. You will be amazed at how your whole approach to a person or problem becomes very different.” – Indra Nooyi, CEO of PepsiCo*



“Collie in control”

*How might you convert a negative mindset in to a constructive one?*

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On a course this week, my colleague, Caroline, had asked people to volunteer to tell the group their favourite “moan”. Jason, a dog owner, regaled us with his moan about irresponsible dog owners who let their dogs poop on the pavement, fail to keep them under control and risk them attacking other dogs.

Fast forward two days to today.

Out riding my bike on the cycle track around the local lake, I crossed over a small bridge, started up the hill and wham! A bundle of black and white furry Collie came hurtling towards me, barking furiously, with its owner chasing it. Dogs have chased and barked at me before on my bike and I have had no issue, usually stopping to pet

them. However, before I could stop, this delightful Collie decided to bite my calf.

Perhaps the Collie’s a vegetarian and in my fluorescent yellow jacket and black shorts I resembled a banana; whatever the cause, I managed to fend it off until the owner controlled it. She voiced an apology and I rode off, smiling at the irony of being bitten after hearing Jason’s story.

Caroline had asked people to “moan” because she wanted to demonstrate a technique called Positive Intent, which is designed to help people avoid being dragged in to a negative discussion. This technique is based on a presupposition from Neuro Linguistic Programming that every behaviour has a positive intention, at least on the part of the person (or dog?) displaying it. (Please refer [here](#) for a more detailed explanation of this presupposition).

If someone is moaning, use the technique:

- Listen carefully to them
- Acknowledge what they are saying (that does not mean agreeing with them!)
- Ensure that they have finished

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- State, “So what you want is...” and repeat in their words e.g. “So what you want is for people to control their dogs, scoop the poop and to reintroduce dog licences?” If you receive a “Yes”, great, if you receive a “No”, clarify what they do want.
- Ask how this might be achieved or how they might achieve it – you are not trying to solve the issue for them, you are working to have them think more constructively.
- If you would like to see the full quotation from Indra Nooyi, [go here](#).

## SO

You should see that the “positive intent” is revealed when asking the question “So what you want is...?”

Where might you use this? Here are some suggestions:

- A colleague is moaning about other people at work and you want them to have a more constructive viewpoint
- You want to avoid being dragged into a negative cycle of moaning, which happens if you join in the moaning
- Your partner, friend or colleague is feeling miserable and you want to break them out of that mood
- You react negatively to a person

I also use an alternative version of this called the “Positive Rant” or “Constructive Ranting”. In this version, we do not state what they want but let them say it. To read an article on Solutions Focus in which this is explained, please go [here](#).

## ACTION

- Try this technique out for yourself, the next time someone is moaning.



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## TO CLOSE

When I returned home, I sat down on the stairs to take off my shoes and rub some disinfectant on my “wound”, which luckily hadn’t penetrated the flesh. My son was in the next room and shouted, “Hey Dad, did you know that it’s a full moon two days before your birthday?”

“I’ve just been bitten by a dog,” I replied (we have surreal conversations in our family).

“Well, if you start howling before your birthday, we’ll know it was a werewolf!”

That’s all the sympathy I get. Have a week of positive intent.

*John Brooker | Facilitate, Innovate, Transform.*

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