

NEGATIVE INTENT

By Marlene and Bob Neufeld

Early in life (for some of us as early as conception, prenatal or birth) we all experienced emotional states we could not tolerate. When we did not receive the support from others that we needed, we came to believe that there was something wrong with us that caused the problem. We call these beliefs identity cracks. We also talk about these as our unmet childhood needs, those needs or desires that did not get met in our childhood.

The first step in the critical process of healing our unmet childhood needs is to understand how they affect our experience of ourselves and our ability to relate intimately with others.

We are not usually conscious of the ways we place expectations on our partners to make up for some deficiency from childhood. We either deny or justify these needs. They are often related to being accepted, or loved. When we are in relationship, we unconsciously require our partners to become our parents, to rescue us, or be super human in order to make our lives easier. These childhood needs actually reflect a distorted image of what love truly means. Out of these childhood needs we make demands or act in destructive or negative ways.

There is often an "or else" behind our demands. It is important to own our destructive impulses, such as our desire to destroy, punish, hurt, or demean our partners. This is difficult for most of us because it goes against all of our childhood conditioning and our idealized self image. We bury our lower self behind our ability to reason away the negative impulses. But as long as they stay buried they will get acted out or acted in. Our negative intent is the resistance to letting go into the more vulnerable feelings and into taking personal responsibility.

We cannot reason ourselves out of our childhood needs and destructive impulses/negative intents. We need to own them and access the feelings underneath.

Self-flagellation (beating ourselves up for having these childhood needs and destructive impulses/negative intents) is optional; in fact we believe it is a detour which takes us away from movement. We need to own them to our partner as our partner is experiencing them anyway. Our partner usually has his/her own version of unmet needs and destructive impulses which they are experiencing. Once we have owned them we can access the feelings underneath.

We believe that our primary relationships are the perfect place to heal our childhood needs, in fact that is one of the purposes of close relationships. You can choose to live in a bubble to try to protect your unmet needs being brushed up against, or you can choose to be in intimate relationships. The payoff is closeness and intimacy.

Negative Intent

Marlene's story: Yesterday, I got angry and then Bob got angry at me and didn't listen to me and then I wanted to hide and run away.

I did a couple of things differently than I used to do them in the past.

I didn't leave, I would walk out of the room, but come back in.

I didn't turn my anger inward. Bob says that what he observed was me moving and expressing as if it was slow motion. He saw my body going through waves of energy. I imagine I was pushing through barriers of resistance to expression.

I became aware of my negative intent to hurt Bob. I made that bigger. I said that I wanted him to go to jail for 100 years and that I would never visit him. At first, part of me believed that I meant it. But another part of me got how ludicrous it was to punish him so hugely for getting angry and not listening.

I realized that I just wanted him to admit that I was right, and I made that bigger. We were on the way to a German carol singing event and I started singing "I am right" to the tune of "Silent Night".

I played with my negative intent, saying that I would not forgive him and gradually over the evening I felt myself thaw until I genuinely felt forgiveness.

Bob's story:

After my initial reaction, I became very present to what was happening right now and set the intent to listen to Marlene and to notice my inner experience.

I noticed calmness inside of myself after I had recognized and revealed that I was angry. . I recognized that I was taking her anger personally, and that a lot of it was not even about me. I also recognized that I was participating in an old pattern which was leading to a disconnection, and this disconnection would be my choice, and that this was so familiar.

When Marlene got into her negative intent, I recognized it as negative intent. I allowed it to be with a certain sense of expansiveness to allow the negative intent to be. I recognized that there was an unmet childhood need speaking, and that Marlene was likely making it bigger. I held space for it. After a while I started collaborating with Marlene making it bigger by doing the same thing by saying that I would kiss the wart on her foot and imagining myself in black-and-white-striped convicts' clothes for 100 years (in a playful sort of way). I laughed when she was singing "I am right". The charge wasn't there any more. I didn't take Marlene's unwillingness to forgive me personally.

I went to the caroling event totally free of the hooks of the event.

Marlene & Bob Neufeld practice body-centered Coaching and Psychotherapy. They are a couple who help couples learn life-changing skills and create closer, more loving relationships with one another. To learn more, see www.marleneandbob.com or call 613-594-9248 to arrange a complimentary 1-hour introductory session.