



STEP 5: SHIFT NEGATIVE INTENTIONS

When we choose negative intentions we are more likely to react in unproductive ways. Below is an example that shows how we can change how we respond effectively at Step 6 by shifting our intentions.




A client shared a common difficult situation they often experience on Search Committees. When the Chair asked the members for feedback on the three finalists for the position, one senior leader, Jerry said, "I like Chad. And Kelly would be fine as well. But Tiana wouldn't be a good fit. Don't get me wrong, I think diversity is important, but we also don't want to lower our standards." She was furious when no one else countered his comments. Once again she was the only one who had the courage to speak up and confront these discriminatory behaviors. Her first thought was to say something like, "This is another example of racist practices that keep our organization so lily white!" But she stopped herself knowing that this would be a CEM, a career-ending move! A couple other people offered their assessment of the candidates while she took a few deep breaths and thought through her options. She then said, "I want to ask us to slow down a moment. Before we make our recommendations, I'd like us to revisit the core competencies we identified for this position and then use these as we offer our feedback about each candidate. I actually liked all three of them on a personal level, but I think we will find some clear distinctions when we assess their demonstrated capacities against our envisioned outcomes." After a pause that seemed to last forever, the Chair agreed and they started to center the competencies in our conversation.

In the following chart I have summarized key elements of her story.

<p>1. The less productive, “negative” intentions</p> <p>Embarrass the colleague; call him out on his racist comment; show everyone else what they should be doing in similar situations</p>	<p>3. More productive, “positive” intentions</p> <p>Address the inappropriate comment in a way that furthers learning; Refocus the conversation on competencies, away from personal opinions and “likability” of the candidates; model how to engage effectively and maintain working relationships</p>
<p>2. When we react less productively, what is the probable impact of our reaction?</p> <p>If she had done this, she might have damaged her relationship with her colleague and other members of the committee; others wouldn’t have learned how to be more effective in similar situations; She may have lost credibility in this group to influence future decisions</p>	<p>4. The impact when we respond out of these positive intentions</p> <p>When she responded this way, the group members readily focused on competencies including the capacity to create inclusive work environments and effectively serve the increasingly diverse client populations; her colleague was able to “save face” and actually participated in identifying a few competencies; she believe they ended up identifying the most competent candidate for their needs</p>

Directions: Think about a recent difficult situation in which you reacted unproductively. Make some notes in the chart that follows using the following prompts:

1. In section #1, write out 1-2 of the less productive, negative intentions you had in that moment.
2. In section #2, write how you reacted less effectively and the probable impact of your reaction.
3. In section #3, rewrite these negative intentions into more productive ones.
4. In section #4, anticipate how you MIGHT have responded more productively out of these more positive, productive intentions; and the probable impact of this response

<p>1. The less productive, “negative” intentions</p> 	<p>3. Rewrite into more productive, “positive” intentions</p> 
<p>2. How did you react less productively? What was the probable impact of your reaction?</p> 	<p>4. How might you have responded? What might be the impact from responding out of these positive intentions?</p> 