

What you focus on grows.

When I'm talking about the relationship between optimism and overall well-being, it's rooted in the belief that what you focus on grows — so why not focus on empathy, understanding, kindness, love, and other positive emotions?

When I think about HOW to do that, I end up spending a lot of time on the suggestion to assume positive intent. Most of the time, most people are doing the best they can with what they've got — being curious about why their "best" looks the way it does can help build empathy and understanding.

That said, it's so important to know that understanding why someone behaves the way they do doesn't mean you have to accept or excuse bad behavior — you can absolutely have compassion AND set boundaries. In fact, setting those boundaries is a great example of having compassion for yourself — and *what you focus on, grows.*



If you'd like to learn more:

- LEARNED OPTIMISM – <https://positivepsychology.com/learned-optimism/>
- REALISTIC OPTIMISM – <https://www.psychotherapyinthecity.com/post/2019/04/25/how-to-develop-realistic-optimism>
- PLAYFUL INQUIRY – <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9IDMOgHINak> (this is the Ted Talk shown in class)
- ASSUMING POSITIVE INTENT – <https://innertalkcoach.com/how-to-assume-positive-intent/>
- AFFIRMATIONS – <https://positivepsychology.com/daily-affirmations/>