

The IAP – Intention, Action, & Perception

How many times we do things with the best of intentions just to find ourselves in the worse of consequences?

Why does it feel that sometimes our words or actions, even though coming from a good place, seem to get lost in translations and we end up with unexpected fights rather than the expected good times?

These questions are actually not that difficult to answer, they simply require that we become aware of the relationship between Intention, Action, & Perception, or as A2C calls it: The IAP

Intention → Action ← Perception



I – Intention is internal. Our intentions are usually representative of our wants and our desired outcome, and unless we tell others what our intentions are, they cannot see them.

A – Our intentions guide our actions. Different from intention, action is external. That is, whereas people cannot see our intentions, they can see our actions.

P – Perception is also an internal construct; however, it is internal to the person receiving or observing the actions and not the one giving it. People's perceptions of our actions are based on their own interpretations of such actions, which can lead to assumptions.

How does the IAP work?

Hold on to the idea that for every action there is an intention. Thus, before taking an action, ask yourselves the following questions:

- Do my actions correspond to my intentions?
- What alternative actions are there for me to achieve my intention?
- Although I cannot control the other person's perception of my actions, how could I better relay what my intention actually is?

Using the IAP

Ex. 1: My intention is for my partner to listen to what I have to say, my action is to speak louder than he is so he can hear me or to be passive aggressive so he can see how frustrated I am. The perception of my actions may be that I am not listening to my partner, that I do not care for what he has to say, or that I am being disrespectful. The consequence would probably be a fight, which is the complete opposite of my initial intention.

Using the AIP in this scenario, I would invite you to think the following:

- Does my action correspond to my intention?
 - If I speak louder and in a passive aggressive manner, will my partner hear what I have to say?
- What alternative actions are there for me to achieve my intention?
 - What if I tell him I am not feeling heard and I would like to opportunity to tell him how I feel? I would probably need to grant him the same in return.
 - Maybe I could write a letter to sort my thoughts and feeling and ask that he allow me to read my letter uninterrupted.
- Although I cannot control the other person's perception of my actions, how could I better relay what my intention actually is?
 - If I let my partner know my intention, maybe he will be more receptive to my actions.

Ex. 2: My intention is to show my friend that I care about her and that I support her no matter what. My action is to tell her that she should leave her partner, especially since all she does is complaint about her partner and how the partner is not treating her as she deserves. The perception may be lack of support because now my friend feels she has to defend her partner. An unintended consequence could be a distance in the relationship.

Use the AIP

- Does my action correspond to my intention?
 - If I tell my friend to leave her partner, will she know that I support her and that I am here for her?
- What alternative actions are there for me to achieve my intention?
 - Maybe I could hear her and ask what she would like to do with respect to her partner.
 - Maybe I could ask her what support she would like from me.
 - Maybe I could tell her that I am here no matter what.
- Although I cannot control the other person's perception of my actions, how could I better relay what my intention actually is?
 - If I let her know that I am here for her, then she would know to ask me when she needs me.

I hope this has been helpful. When in doubt, try the IAP out!!