**Essential Principles of Positive Discipline**

**An Adlerian Approach**

**1. Belonging and Significance:** From the time children are born they are always making decisions that form their personality, their goals (sometimes hidden) in life, and how they “react” to perceived insecurity and stress.

Who they are (good or bad, capable or not capable)

What the world is like (safe or threatening, friendly or unfriendly)

What they need to do to survive or to thrive (based upon the above decisions)

We are in survival mode when we are constantly trying to figure out how to feel a sense of belonging and significance. People are hard-wired to seek these two things in their connections.

When we look at a person’s behavior as that person’s way to seek belonging and/or significance, we can better meet the need behind the behavior.

**2. Private Logic:** This is a concept which comes from Rudolf Dreikurs, Adler’s student and colleague. Private logic is a term used to describe how we each have our own separate realities which make sense according to the way we have each interpreted our experiences. The cycle begins with taking life in through our **perception.** We then **interpret** the information we’ve perceived whichleads us to create a **belief** often having to do with who we are, what others are like and also what the world is like. These beliefs thendrive our **behavior.** The Positive Discipline approach relies upon experiential activities to help us each step into the world of another human being, and develop a greater perception and empathy. Adler said that we “grind our lenses in life” and when we look through someone else’s lens we are capable of change.

**3. Kindness and Firmness** at the same time. Most of us separate the two and then end up bouncing between them. This is also known as going from permissiveness to rigidity. We know that the most effective way to lead or work with children and all people is through an authoritative approach. Positive Discipline calls this being kind and firm at the same time.

**4. Encouragement:** Jane Nelson says in her books, “Where did we get the crazy idea that we need to make children feel worse in order to make them do better? “Children do better when they feel better.” Adler said, “A misbehaving child is a discouraged child.” In order to help a child do better, they need encouragement, just like a plant needs water and sunlight.

**5. Dignity and Respect for All.** Positive Discipline is an egalitarian approach. It relooks at leadership and invites a shift from a top down hierarchical structure to one that is horizontal in nature. The role of the leader is not to enforce, but to guide based upon a shared vision.

**6. Mistakes are Opportunities to Learn**: We look for solutions to problems rather than doling out consequences and rewards. When we can reframe mistakes as opportunities to teach and model the skills and characteristics we want from people, we grow respectful relationships.

**7. “Gemeinschaftsgefühl”:** Our level of emotional well being is connected to “social interest” or “community connection and involvement”. This German term is related to the idea of social harmony. Adler’s original term for private logic was “private intelligence”. He believed that social harmony is when a community or a group is able to achieve a sense of “collective intelligence”.

**8. Connection Before Correction**: We know that people learn best when they feel a sense of belonging and significance. When we can connect with someone before trying to correct their behavior or teach them, we create the safety needed in order for someone to learn.

**9. Discipline means “to teach”:** Most people connect the term discipline with punishment or consequences. The word discipline is derived from the word discipulus, meaning pupil, and disciplina, meaning to teach and to learn.

Terms and definitions compiled by Julia Tomes, CPDT [www.positivediscipline.org](http://www.positivediscipline.org/)

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