

A COACHING GUIDE

Positive Intelligence

Building Mental Fitness to Quiet Your Saboteurs and Strengthen Your Sage

Awareness · Neuroplasticity · Mental Fitness

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“Between stimulus and response there is a space. In that space is our power to choose our response. In our response lies our growth and our freedom.”

— Viktor Frankl, Man’s Search for Meaning



What Is Positive Intelligence

There's a quiet tension many of us carry — the sense that we're capable of more, but something keeps getting in the way.

“Most people lead lives of quiet desperation and go to the grave with the song still in them.”

— Henry David Thoreau

Over 150 years ago, Thoreau observed a truth that remains disturbingly relevant. Desperation has evolved into a modern epidemic — chronic stress, anxiety, feelings of inadequacy, and the relentless race for validation. We often live on autopilot, disconnected from our emotional well-being, trading purpose for performance and presence for productivity.

THE FRAMEWORK

Developed by Shirzad Chamine at Stanford University and grounded in decades of research, Positive Intelligence is a proven system for building mental fitness — the ability to meet life's challenges with clarity, resilience, and intention. Just like physical fitness, mental fitness can be cultivated and developed.

At its core, your PQ (Positive Intelligence Quotient) is the percentage of time your mind is serving you rather than sabotaging you. A higher PQ leads to improved performance, better relationships, and greater happiness.

TWO KEY ASPECTS OF YOUR MIND

Your Saboteurs. Negative thought patterns and inner critics that hold you back — self-doubt, procrastination, perfectionism. These drain your energy and prevent you from showing up as your best self.

Your Sage. The positive, wise part of your mind that responds to challenges with creativity, empathy, and confidence. Your Sage transforms obstacles into opportunities.

Low PQ: Your inner Saboteurs are running the show, triggering stress and reactive patterns.

High PQ: You're operating from your Sage — calm, wise, creative, and grounded in purpose.

IMPROVING YOUR PQ HELPS YOU

- Manage stress with more ease
- Increase empathy and improve relationships
- Overcome self-doubt and perfectionism
- Respond to adversity with clarity

The Tree Metaphor: Roots vs. Leaves

Imagine you're caring for a tree. One day you notice the leaves turning brown and brittle — the visible signs of stress: the tension at work, the strained relationship, the self-doubt you can point

to and name. Alarmed, you rush to water the leaves themselves — treating each problem as it appears, spraying one, then the next. But the tree keeps withering. No amount of water on the leaves can revive it, because the leaves were never the problem. They were only where the problem showed up.

This is how most of us approach life's challenges — treating the symptoms instead of the cause. The real issue lives in the roots: your beliefs, your mindset, your emotional health, your sense of identity. Starve the roots, and no amount of attention to the leaves will bring the tree back to life.

Positive Intelligence is the work of watering the roots. It shifts your attention from the surface to the source — quieting the Saboteurs that drain the roots dry, and strengthening the Sage that feeds them.

THE RESEARCH BEHIND IT

Positive Intelligence draws on four established fields — positive psychology, neuroscience, cognitive behavioral therapy, and emotional intelligence. Each points to the same conclusion: your brain is not fixed, your patterns are learned, and both can be rewired with the right practice. That rewiring is exactly what you'll build in the Neural Pathways section ahead.

The 10 Saboteurs: Your Inner Critics

Positive Intelligence identifies ten Saboteurs — mental habits that sabotage success and happiness.

1. The Judge

The master Saboteur. Constantly criticizes ourselves, others, and our circumstances. Learning to recognize this voice — “name it to claim it” — is the first step toward quieting the negative messages our minds send throughout the day.

2. Controller

Driven by anxiety, seeks to take control of situations and people, often creating tension. Feels uncomfortable with unpredictability and trusts only itself.

3. Hyper-Achiever

Believes self-worth is determined by accomplishments and external validation. Often leads to burnout and lack of satisfaction despite high achievement.

4. Restless

Seeks constant new excitement, jumping from task to task. Leads to distraction, lack of depth, and a feeling of never being satisfied or present.

5. Stickler

Perfectionist — demands everything be done “right.” Can be overly critical of self and others, causing rigidity, anxiety, and dissatisfaction.

6. Pleaser

Seeks acceptance by doing things for others, often at their own expense. Can lead to resentment and a lack of genuine relationships.

7. **Hyper-Vigilant**

Constantly anxious, imagining worst-case scenarios. Leads to exhaustion and difficulty enjoying the present moment.

8. **Avoider**

Evades conflict, unpleasant tasks, and difficult emotions. Leads to procrastination, a buildup of unresolved issues, and a lack of progress.

9. **Victim**

Exaggerates difficulties and may feel helpless. Often used to gain sympathy but results in resentment and a loss of self-empowerment.

10. **Hyper-Rational**

Relies heavily on logic at the expense of emotions. Leads to emotional detachment, making it hard to connect with others or understand emotional needs.

Take the free 5-minute assessment [HERE](#).

When Saboteurs Become Roles We Play

When Saboteurs take over, they don't just show up in our thoughts — they show up in our roles. In moments of stress or pressure, we often slip into reactive patterns known as the Drama Triangle.

THE DRAMA TRIANGLE

Victim → “This is happening to me. I’m stuck.” (*Victim Saboteur*)

Rescuer → “I need to fix this for everyone.” (*Pleaser Saboteur*)

Persecutor → “This is your fault.” (*Controller / Judge*)

These aren't who we are. They are patterns we fall into when our Saboteurs are running the show.

FROM VICTIM TO PLAYER: THE KOFMAN SHIFT

Fred Kofman offers a powerful reframe — an invitation to shift from Victim to Player.

Victim mindset: “Life is happening to me.”

Player mindset: “What part can I play in how I respond to this?”

This shift is not about blame — it's about ownership and reclaiming your power. The shift from Victim to Player is the same as the shift from Saboteur to Sage. When you begin to recognize these patterns — in your thoughts and in your relationships — you create space. And in that space... you get to choose.

Watch the 12-minute video: Be a Player, Not a Victim (escalator scene at 4:45)

Saboteurs: Protectors Turned Critics

Understanding Saboteurs is powerful — but this really matters in the small, everyday moments.

You say yes when you really mean no → *Pleaser*

You overwork to prove your worth → *Hyper-Achiever*

You avoid something important or delay action → *Avoider*

You overthink or scan for what could go wrong → *Hyper-Vigilant*

You become critical when things don't go as planned → *Judge or Controller*

These patterns are incredibly common — especially for high-achieving, thoughtful individuals. They are not character flaws. They are learned patterns. This isn't a motivation problem. It's a mental fitness problem. And the good news is — mental fitness can be strengthened.

THEIR ORIGINS

Saboteurs often begin as survival strategies — thought patterns rooted in our instinct to seek safety, belonging, or control. While they may have served us in the past, over time they become rigid and self-defeating.

WHEN STRENGTHS ARE SABOTAGED

Saboteurs often hijack your greatest natural strengths by overusing or distorting them. If you identify as a Pleaser, your strength lies in empathy, care, and love — when guided by your Sage. But when the Saboteur takes over, those same gifts lead to difficulty saying no and sacrificing healthy boundaries. Saboteurs don't destroy your strengths — they misuse them.

BUT AREN'T THEY GOOD FOR ME?

Your Saboteurs will claim they're good for you. Your Judge insists that badgering you over your mistakes and shortcomings is what pushes you to improve. Your Hyper-Vigilant insists its constant scanning for danger is what keeps you safe.

Think of it like a smoke alarm. For one brief moment, that piercing sound is exactly what you need — it alerts you to real danger and gets you to act. But if the alarm keeps blaring long after the smoke has cleared — or worse, goes off every time you make toast — it stops protecting you. It just becomes noise. It doesn't put out any fires. It just deafens you to everything else, including the clear thinking you need to actually solve the problem.

Negative emotion works the same way. It's useful for a quick second — just long enough to alert you that something needs attention. But if you stay in stress, frustration, or unhappiness beyond that moment, you become tunnel-visioned and lose access to the calm, creative thinking your Sage brain can offer. If you're in negative emotion for more than a second, your Saboteur isn't protecting you anymore — it's just sounding the alarm on a fire that's already out.

Building New Neural Pathways

Your brain is not fixed — it can be rewired. Every repeated thought and behavior strengthens a neural pathway, the way footpaths through a forest become the easiest to follow the more they're walked. Right now, your Saboteur pathways are worn smooth from years of use, and your Sage pathways are still growing in. To conquer your Saboteurs, you build three core components of mental fitness — the practice that makes a new pathway the path of least resistance.

1. Catch Your Saboteurs

If you're in negative emotion for more than a second, you're in Saboteur mode. Label your thoughts and emotions in that moment as Saboteur and let them go. To be able to do that, you need to have studied your Saboteurs and discredited their lies and limiting beliefs.

Recognize when you feel stressed, anxious, or self-critical — this signals a Saboteur. Rather than “I'm not confident,” try: “Oh, the Judge is back again.” Naming the Saboteur weakens its voice.

2. Energize Your Sage Brain

Boost your ability to command your mind to quiet the Saboteur region and amplify the Sage region. Using 10-second PQ® Reps, you learn to run your brain, rather than allow your Saboteur-hijacked brain to run you.

How PQ Reps work: Slowly rub your fingertips together until you can feel the ridges of your fingerprints, listen to surrounding sounds, or focus on your breath. This sensory awareness anchors attention in the present moment and helps you step back from a Saboteur thought, diminishing its emotional intensity. PQ Reps take only seconds — practice while waiting in line, transitioning between tasks, or before a difficult conversation.

A simple practice sequence:

- Notice — recognize the stress, anxiety, or self-criticism
- Pause — take a deep breath and pause the mental narrative
- Focus on sensation — fingertips, sounds, or breath for 10–15 seconds
- Shift perspective — ask, “What would my Sage say here?”
- Respond mindfully — act or respond from that more mindful place

Like any path, the more you walk it, the more it becomes the way you naturally go. Research on neuroplasticity backs this up: consistent practice over weeks produces measurable change in the brain.

3. Use Your Sage Powers

Your Sage is the one in you that handles challenges with a clear and calm mind, and positive emotions. Your Sage accesses five positive powers. For peak performance, you learn to boost all five powers and know when to use which power.

1. Empathize

Approach yourself and others with empathy and understanding. The Sage does not judge but seeks to connect, seeing the good in people and situations.

2. Explore

The mindset of curiosity. Rather than fearing challenges, the Sage sees them as opportunities to learn and grow, approaching situations with an open mind.

3. Innovate

Embrace creative solutions and problem-solving. The Sage encourages thinking outside the box and using obstacles as opportunities for new approaches.

4. Navigate

Connect with your deeper values and purpose. Rather than reacting impulsively, the Sage considers how actions align with your core values and long-term vision.

5. Activate

Take calm, focused action. Rather than panicking or overthinking, the Sage mind moves forward confidently, adapting to feedback and embracing challenges with resilience.

INNER WEATHER VS. OUTER WEATHER

The Five Powers help us focus on what we can control — our perspective, emotions, and choices. Stephen Covey reminds us that while we can't control the “outer weather” of life, we always have power over our “inner weather.” He ties this to Viktor Frankl's teaching on response-ability — our ability to consciously choose our response to any situation.

“Between stimulus and response there is a space. In that space is our power to choose our response. In our response lies our growth and our freedom.”

— Viktor Frankl, *Man's Search for Meaning*

PI and the Enneagram

The Enneagram Assessment provides even greater clarity by helping you uncover your core motivations, strengths, and growth opportunities — a personalized roadmap for deeper self-awareness and transformation.

ENNEAGRAM TYPE	SABOTEUR(S)	DESCRIPTION
Type 1 — The Reformer	<i>Judge & Stickler</i>	Self-critical and sticklers for perfection, driven by a strong sense of right and wrong.
Type 2 — The Helper	<i>Pleaser</i>	Seek approval by helping others, sometimes to the detriment of their own needs.
Type 3 — The Achiever	<i>Judge & Hyper-Achiever</i>	Push to constantly achieve and prove worth, attaching self-worth to accomplishments.
Type 4 — The Individualist	<i>Victim</i>	Can feel misunderstood or unique, amplifying emotions and a sense of being different.
Type 5 — The Investigator	<i>Avoider & Hyper-Rational</i>	Often distance from emotions, relying on logic and pulling away from connection.

Type 6 — The Loyalist	<i>Hyper-Vigilant</i>	Constantly anticipate and worry about potential threats, focused on security and safety.
Type 7 — The Enthusiast	<i>Restless & Avoider</i>	Seek new stimulation and tend to avoid discomfort or anything unpleasant.
Type 8 — The Challenger	<i>Controller</i>	Assertive and protective, seeking control to feel secure and avoid vulnerability.
Type 9 — The Peacemaker	<i>Avoider & Pleaser</i>	Desire peace and often avoid conflict, sidestepping difficult issues to keep harmony.

Full Enneagram report (\$29): truity.com/test/enneagram-personality-test

Reflection Exercises

Use these questions to begin exploring the judgments and beliefs that may be holding you back. Take your time with each one.

JUDGMENT THAT ISN'T SERVING YOU

- What self-judgment or belief do you frequently make, in 7 words or less?
- How does this judgment make you feel emotionally? What is the impact?
- What is the source of this judgment?
- How do you know it is true? What is the lie?
- What is a truer belief?
- Who would you be without this judgment or belief?

Additional Resources

VIDEOS

TED Talk — Know Your Inner Saboteurs by Shirzad Chamine

Be a Player, Not a Victim by Fred Kofman (escalator scene at 4:45)

ASSESSMENTS

Free 5-Minute Saboteurs Assessment — positiveintelligence.com

Enneagram Personality Assessment — truity.com