



## It's Just Information

Years ago, a mentor absolutely changed my life when he said, "Information is just information. It isn't good or bad...it's just information. You are the one who determines if it's good or bad based on your perception of the information at the time you receive it."

WOW!

"It's just information" was such a game changer because of the freedom it provided. My feelings no longer needed to be tethered to the information I received. I could cut the ties. Whether I perceived information as "good" or "bad" was in my control, and as a result, I got to take my power back.

In the past, I perceived most of the information that I received as "bad" because I was in a bad place myself: anxious, depressed, frustrated, resentful, and riddled with self-doubt. As I worked on my insides and transitioned to a "good" place, a place of peace, positivity, hope, forgiveness, confidence, I noticed that my perceptions transitioned as well, and I began perceiving most information that I received as "good." Even if the information was perceived as "bad news" by other people's standards, I was able to find the good in it.

Let's say that one of your best friends is planning a birthday party in 2 months at a club downtown with 75 people at 10:00 p.m. on a Friday night. Not only do you hate going downtown, but you're typically in your sweats and ready for bed by 10:00 p.m. on Friday nights, and you also hate crowds.

You already decide that yes, you'll go because it's the right thing to do to support and celebrate your friend, but you are **not** happy about it, and feel your anxiety bubble up every time you see the event listed on your calendar. When your friend calls you 2 weeks before the party, yelling and saying, "I just got the **worst** news ever! The venue fell through and there is NOTHING else in the area to accommodate this many people, I already checked, so I'm just gonna cancel. We'll do something later in the year as a group or something, and I just wanted you to hear it directly from me that the party is off."

On the outside, you play the best friend role and show complete empathy, but on the inside, you're smiling ear-to-ear and doing a happy dance. The "worst news ever" to your friend is the "best news ever" to you.

**Information is information. The receiver determines if the information is “good” or “bad.”**

So, how have I used “It’s just information” in real life?

### **1. Conflict situations**

•When someone is upset, yelling, and saying things that blow my bangs straight back, instead of perceiving it as “bad” and going into “fight” mode (yelling back) or into “flight” mode (checking out and disengaging) I say to myself, “It’s just information, it’s just information, it’s just information. It’s being stated **VERY** loudly, but it’s just information.” Saying this over and over in my head refocuses my brain on the message, rather than on how the message is being presented. The fact that this person is so upset means that he or she is hurting. And the fact that he or she has come to *me* means that I’m in a position to help. This person’s complaint is *my* opportunity to resolve the situation and turn his or her day around, and in my eyes, that is a **VERY** good thing.

### **2. Performance Reviews (and other vulnerable conversations)**

•As an overachieving, Type A people pleaser, I used to worry for weeks leading up to my annual performance review meeting with my boss thinking of every possible critique that he could share. Since I held myself to a nearly impossible performance standard and was so critical of my every move, I naturally expected, and anticipated, others to do the same. Also, because I struggled with a high level of insecurity in the past, any type of critique, not matter how positive the person’s intention, often triggered my insecurities and made me feel threatened: threatened that I wasn’t “good enough” personally and that I wasn’t doing a good job professionally.

•Saying, “It’s just information” brought me back to reality and back to the present moment by shifting my thoughts away from the future and all of the potential “faults” that my boss would share to the “facts” – that the meeting wasn’t here yet and that I had the power to use the information, no matter how it would be presented, to grow. That brought such a wave of peace. It allowed me to drop my shoulders and be more relaxed going into each meeting moving forward because whatever my boss shared was just information: information that I could use to grow emotionally and professionally, information that I could use to be a better employee and leader, and information that I could impart to others to help them grow, too.

The next time you have an opportunity to be coached or critiqued professionally, remind yourself that “it’s just information.” The next time you’re having a conversation with a friend and find yourself in a place of vulnerability (he or she mentions some of your character

defects), remind yourself that “it’s just information” and respond with an attitude of gratitude: “Thank you. I can’t change what I’m not aware of, so I appreciate your saying something.”

**It’s just information.**

If your goal is to continually improve, decide today that you will no longer perceive what others say about you as “bad.” Instead, use every critique, comment and complaint as an opportunity to grow because growth is always a “good” thing.

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**For more tips like these, send an email to [andrea@andreaashcraft.com](mailto:andrea@andreaashcraft.com) with your name and “Add Me” in the subject line.**