

THE WINNING ATTITUDE

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Life is like a journey at sea. Some days are peaceful, with sunlit blue skies, calm waters, and gentle breezes filling our sails. Most days present us an abundance of interesting and often unexpected challenges. At times, high waves crash all around and the sky darkens as heavy storms approach.

Whatever experiences come along, you'll navigate them more skillfully if you master your attitude. Doing so will not make your problems go away. It will, however, make your journey more enjoyable and rewarding. You'll experience greater understanding, enthusiasm, and endurance. You'll find yourself "breezin' through life," embracing the lessons and opportunities that come your way.

COLORS

Your living is determined not so much by
what life brings to you,
As by the attitude you bring to life...
Not so much by what happens to you,
As by the way your mind looks at what
happens.
Circumstances and situations do color life,
But you have been given the mind to choose
what the color should be.

John Miller

Your attitude is expressed before you say a word. It shows in the way you look, stand, walk, and talk. If you are cheerful and upbeat, your attitude acts like a magnet. It might be said to be infectious.

Scientists are finding that our feelings, thoughts, and attitudes play a role in our mental health and contribute to our physical well-being and ability to recover from illness. The only thing that we can really control is our mental attitude. Our attitude is often what handicaps us. We can change our attitude when we can't change the circumstances.

Our beliefs become self-fulfilling prophecies. Research on "mental imaging" suggests that what we think is often what we get. Elwood N. Chapman, in his book *Your Attitude is Showing* (Macmillan Publishing Company, 1964), calls this the High Expectancy Theory and points out that the more you expect (attitude) from a situation, the more success you will achieve.

If you expect success, you will succeed. If you expect failure, you will fail. It is as simple as that. Negative thinking is a **learned** habit. We can condition our minds to think positively by replacing negative thoughts with positive ones--hour by hour, day by day. We can't control all of the circumstances of our lives, but we can control our attitude toward them. Positive mental attitude means having the appropriate attitude under the circumstances.

Chapman outlines the following ways to make your attitude more positive:

- + Refuse to worry about negative elements in your life over which you have no control.
- + Don't try to live other peoples' lives for them. They make their own choices and must take the responsibility for those decisions.
- + Take care of small, nagging problems quickly. Don't let them drag on. Break bigger problems down into smaller parts that can be solved.
- + When starting the day, think about the good things that can happen.
- + When ending the day, replay in your mind the accomplishments of the day, no matter how minor.
- + Help others focus on the positive. For example, when greeting someone ask about the "bright spot" of the day.

Most likely, you are not aware of all the choices you make. An important first step in being positive is to become more aware of your choices. Don't blame fate, your parents, your boss, or anything else for who and where you are. You are the architect of your own destiny. It is not what happens to you that causes you to feel and act the way you do. It is what you choose to think and believe about what happens that generates your feelings and actions. You control yourself by the choices you make. Choose wisely.

A century ago, Robert Louis Stevenson devised a number of rules to help people live happier, more productive lives. These rules may be over 100 years old, but they are still excellent guidelines to helping you have a winning attitude:

- ♥ Make up your mind to be happy. Learn to find pleasure in simple things.

- ♥ Make the best of circumstances. No one has everything, and everyone has something of sorrow.
- ♥ Don't take yourself too seriously.
- ♥ Don't let criticism worry you--you can't please everyone.
- ♥ Don't let your neighbors set your standards. Be yourself.
- ♥ Do things you enjoy doing, but stay out of debt.
- ♥ Don't borrow trouble. Imaginary things are harder to bear than actual ones.
- ♥ Since hate poisons the soul, do not cherish enmities and grudges. Avoid people who make you unhappy.
- ♥ Have many interests. If you can't travel, read about places.
- ♥ Don't hold postmortems or spend time brooding over sorrows and mistakes.
- ♥ Don't be the one who never gets over things.
- ♥ Keep busy at something. A very busy person never has time to be unhappy.

The Optimist Creed

- To be just as enthusiastic about the success of others as you are about your own.
- To forget the mistakes of the past and press on to the greater achievements of the future.
- To wear a cheerful countenance at all times and give every living creature you meet a smile.
- To give so much time to the improvement of yourself that you have no time to criticize others.
- To be too large for worry, too noble for anger, too strong for fear, and too happy to permit the presence of trouble.

Source: Optimist International

1994: 8M