

THE WINNING ATTITUDE

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Before the meeting, write some of the following quotes on a sheet of paper and then post them on the walls or in prominent places for everyone to see. Refer to them during the topic presentation or ask participants to discuss what the sayings mean to them.

"I discovered I always have choices, and sometimes it's only a choice of attitude." Judith M. Knowlton

"Attitude is a little thing that makes a BIG difference."

"Where there is an open mind, there will always be a frontier."

"Quality is reflected in our attitude."

"Leadership is an attitude before it is an ability."

"Pride is a personal commitment. It is an attitude which separates excellence from mediocrity."

"Nature presents us with an infinite variety of attitudes--from gloomy mist to glorious sunshine. Our own moods, whether gloomy or bright, radiate to those around us."

Introduction

An attitude is the way you communicate your mood to others. Did you ever stop to think how your attitude controls your life? *Discuss.* Some of us have been at the mercy of our attitudes! Why? Because we haven't been aware of them and their effect on others.

This program topic will help participants realize that:

- ♥ Our attitude is the strongest element we have to control in our lives.
- ♥ Our attitudes affect others.
- ♥ Attitudes can be changed.

What Is Attitude?

Ask members to "bring themselves" in a bag. The month before topic is taught, give each person a paper bag and ask them to bring five items in the bag that will help describe them. Suggest that they bring items to describe themselves personally, their family, what they do, how they feel about others, etc. If you don't get this done ahead of time, ask members to draw pictures on the bag or take three or four items out of their purse to describe themselves. Discuss how the items or pictures relate to personal attitudes.

Interestingly enough, there are two types of attitudes. One is personal; the other social. Our personal attitude contains our individual philosophy of life; our social attitude describes our view of society. It is personal attitudes that make optimists and pessimists, idealists and cynics, mavericks and conformists, high achievers and high school dropouts. It is social attitudes that make liberals and conservatives, moderates and radicals, pros and antis, bigots and bleeding hearts.

For the purpose of this program topic, we shall confine our comments to personal attitudes. Thus, our personal attitude might reflect some of the following:

- A bodily posture showing or meaning to show mental state, emotion, or mood.
- A manner of acting, feeling, or thinking that shows one's disposition.
- One's disposition or opinion.
- A way of thinking. It can be purposeful thinking along a certain line--or it can be accidental thinking.

We don't just choose an attitude and cultivate it. And, no one can be positive all of the time. Generally our attitudes come from our environment, our experiences, our folks, our friends. Thus we need to examine our attitudes and see what they are projecting to others.

Every attitude we have, positive or negative, is always ready for action. For example, if we don't like someone, it is almost impossible to hide it. People feel and sense our attitude. If we don't have confidence in ourselves, the whole world knows it. If we carry hates and prejudices in our minds and hearts, they rear their ugly heads just at the times that cost us the most.

Develop a Positive Attitude Each Day

Ask members to answer "That's Me!" if they practice the items below. If you like, you could have them stand as they say "That's Me!" Read each item.

- * Wake up to soft and pleasant music. Don't use a loud alarm clock.
- * Allow yourself enough time to prepare for the day's activities. Don't get up at the last moment.
- * Think about positive things you expect to accomplish today.

- * Eat a healthy breakfast. Don't drug yourself with coffee or cigarettes.
- * Discuss your plans for the day with someone.
- * Each day, find some positive feature about your partner or a friend. Compliment him/her on it.
- * Try not to take everything so seriously.
- * Try to see the positive aspects of at least one problem. See problems as opportunities.
- * Learn to accept situations over which you have no control.
- * Often take time to reward yourself.
- * Expect the best of people and situations.
- * Appreciate the good things that happen.
- * Use big, positive, cheerful words.
- * Use bright, favorable words and phrases to describe others.
- * Smile often.
- * Will try to accomplish more of the above in the future.

In summary:

- ♥ A positive, appreciative attitude is basic to good mental health and all-around success.
- ♥ Our attitude can reflect our physical health. Those who keep their "sunny sides up" and see the glass as half full rather than half empty are more than perpetual optimists. They may also be in considerably better health than their gloomier friends and co-workers.
- ♥ Attitude affects the quality of the relationships in our lives. Have you ever heard: "That person has a negative attitude." or "You can't tell her/him a thing; she/he has a defensive attitude."
- ♥ A positive attitude is so powerful it can enhance personality traits. It can help you make the most of your personality.

♥ A positive attitude triggers enthusiasm, enhances creativity, and can cause good things to happen.

You might want to read the following ideas to participants, if time, and discuss.

How to be Happy

- ♥ Give something away (no strings attached).
- ♥ Do a kindness (and forget it).
- ♥ Spend time with the aged (experience is priceless).
- ♥ Look intently into the face of a baby (and marvel).
- ♥ Laugh often (it is life's lubricant).
- ♥ Give thanks (many times a day).
- ♥ Pray (so you don't lose your way).
- ♥ Work (with great vigor).
- ♥ Plan as though you will live forever (you will enjoy life more).
- ♥ Live as though you will die tomorrow (because you will die on some tomorrow).

Source: Balance Newsletter, Oct. 1993. University of Nebraska, Lincoln.

Obstacles to Developing a Winning Attitude

Discuss with participants some of the obstacles to keeping a positive, winning attitude. Some of the ideas which might surface include:

- * Exaggerating: Overestimating problems and underestimating abilities.
- * Overgeneralizing: Taking an isolated event and assuming it always happens.
- * Personalizing: Thinking everything revolves around you.
- * Either/or thinking: Seeing things as mutually exclusive, even when they are not.
- * Jumping to conclusions: Drawing conclusions from limited information.

* Ignoring the positive: Focusing on one negative and forgetting about all the positives.

You Can Change Your Attitude

If attitudes are so important, what can we do about them? Everyone should engage in some form of attitude adjustment regularly. We often think of weekends, holidays, or vacations as times to rejuvenate our lives. Some people may practice attitude renewal daily. For example, some may be renewed by a few moments of meditation, a brisk walk, a chat with a friend, or music.

Chapman, in *Attitude: Your Most Priceless Possession*, outlines eight adjustment techniques to help you retain or restore a positive attitude:

1. **Employ the flipside technique.** When a "negative" enters your life, flip the problem over and look for whatever humor may exist on the other side. When this is successful, you will be able to minimize the negative impact of a problem on your attitude. Humor is an important ingredient in this technique.

2. **Play your winners.** Like a business, you have winners in your life. The more you focus on them the better. All of us have to deal with positive factors (winners) and negative factors (losers) in our lives. If not careful, we let losers push the winners in the background. Some ways to make your winners more important include:

- * **THINK** about your winners. Concentrate on the positives.
- * **TALK** about your winners. Talk about the happy, exciting things of life.
- * **REWARD** yourself by enjoying your winners. Do what you enjoy.

3. Simplify! Simplify! Free yourself from complications. An uncluttered focus helps you accept and enjoy life's simple pleasures. Each of us probably has some cluttered areas that we could clear out:

- * Unused and unappreciated possessions,
- * Too many involvements,
- * Career-home imbalance,
- * Putting off the little things, and
- * Holding on to worn-out relationships.

4. Insulate! Insulate! Learn to live with certain "no-win" situations that cannot be resolved, thrown out, or ignored. Each of us probably has a way of working out or coping with some of these situations: talk about it, work harder, laugh, share problem with supreme being, or change environments.

5. Give your positive attitude to others. You can keep your positive attitude by giving it to others. Everyone winds up a winner when positive attitudes are shared.

6. Look better to yourself. Often you look better to others than you do to yourself. When you have a poor self-image, you are looking through a glass darkly. When you feel you don't look good, nothing else looks good. But, when you look good to yourself, everything else looks better. You may want to adjust your positive attitude through image improvements such as improving your wardrobe, changing your hairstyle or cosmetics, looking healthier, being yourself, or keeping a good self-image.

7. Accept the physical connection. Most people feel there is a relationship between

physical well-being and attitude. Exercise helps keep us out of attitudinal ruts.

8. Clarify your mission. An individual with a purpose is more apt to have a positive attitude than someone without direction. A purpose in life helps individuals keep focused, provides perspective, and destroys uncertainty.

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