

Reinvigoration Strategies

By Kay Cross, MEd

Extreme Attitude Makeover

How changing your attitude can rejuvenate your life and career.

In our last two columns, we discussed the importance of molding your personal vision and purpose into a mission that reflects your values. This revamping of who you are and where you want to go in life and business can be reinvigorating. However, one of the most critical elements to leading a successful life lies in having a positive attitude.

Every day of your life, you are forming, changing or reinforcing your attitude. Your attitude determines your approach to life and defines your relationships with other people. It can also mean the difference between success and failure, since a positive perspective can turn your problems into blessings. According to John Maxwell, author of *The Winning Attitude*, “Our attitude is the primary force that will determine whether we succeed or fail.” In simple terms, your attitude will make or break you.

There are three critical steps in changing your attitude: First, develop gratitude; next, lead others by serving; and finally, learn how to face your fears so you can accomplish what you want to in life.

Step 1: Develop Gratitude

According to *Webster’s New Collegiate Dictionary*, the term *grateful* refers to being “appreciative of benefits received; affording pleasure or contentment; [and] expressing or denoting thankfulness.” Gratefulness promotes humility, stimulates your faith and promotes contentment.

Without daily recognition of the things for which we are grateful, it is easy to become negative or adopt a self-centered perspective about life (the “It’s all about me!” syndrome). Take the time to remind yourself every day that your life is actually

GIVING THANKS

Here are some practical tips on how to develop a keen sense of gratitude in your daily life:

- Set a time each day to make a mental or written list of the people and things you are grateful to have in your life. Keeping a personal journal is a great way to accomplish this.
- Be gracious, and every day find opportunities to thank people for small things they do.
- Realize that everyone wants to be appreciated and that it takes only a moment to express your gratitude.
- Be generous in your thanks, and remember that gratitude is free!
- Never take lightly the favor that others bestow on your life; consider it a precious gift.
- Learn to speak words of gratitude. Practice until it becomes natural.

part of a much larger picture and that the way you choose to react to the challenges of life ultimately defines who you are and what you believe.

In my daily interactions with clients, I am constantly amazed at the difference an attitude can make. Given the same set of circumstances, there is a world of difference when one person responds to the situation with gratefulness and the other reacts with defensiveness or irritability. Even during times of conflict or distress, you have the power to give a bad situation a more positive outcome so long as you have the right attitude. For a look at simple ways to develop a sense of gratitude, see “Giving Thanks” on the next page

Step 2: Lead by Serving

The greatest leaders are those who serve. The way they accomplish that is by lifting everyone around them to greater heights and making them feel that they are an integral part of a team. Johann Wolfgang von Goethe states it perfectly: “Treat people as if they were what they ought to be and you help them to become what they are capable of being.”

In giving to others, you learn that they will, in turn, give back to you. During even the most stressful, heart-wrenching periods of your own life, chances are you will benefit by making an effort to help someone else in need. Pull up a chair, lend an ear, or feed a hungry friend. Serving others will remind you that life is a gift of daily, unexpected pleasures available to

you—so long as your attitude is open to receiving those pleasures. For practical tips on becoming a service leader, see “Attitude Adjustment Advice” on the next page.

Step 3: Face Your Fears

One of the greatest obstacles to developing and maintaining a hopeful attitude is a fear of the unknown. It is all too easy to become complacent, apathetic and lazy when we choose to live in our own comfort zone in order to avoid this fear.

Fourteen years ago I had the crazy notion of retiring from my teaching position to start my own personal fitness training business. I was single, 25 years old and terrified of giving up my guaranteed salary to start a business that offered no such guarantees. Some people thought I was crazy. But thanks to the encouragement and support of my family, I took the risk. As a result, I have enjoyed a career I love and have grown incredibly, both personally and professionally. There were many places along the journey that were fearful and stressful, but I am a better person for having made the trip.

John Maxwell states that “fear is a steppingstone to growth.” The fact is that we can use fear to our advantage. How can you conquer fear? One way is to reprogram your brain’s responses to fear by intentionally putting yourself into new, uncomfortable situations. For example, the first time I ever spoke to a large group

was as a fourth grader in a school play. I had to memorize dozens of lines and act as emcee. I'm sure I must have been terrified, but I lived through it and actually did a great job. The funny thing is that years later, I still get scared when first speaking to large groups, but fear is quickly replaced by energy and passion. For a list of ways to conquer your personal fears, see "Fear Not" below.

Adjust Your Attitude

Rejuvenation requires that you take an honest look at your attitude. Do others yearn to be with you? Do they draw energy and sustenance from your presence? Are you consciously grateful every day, even in the face of pain and suffering? Have you experienced the satisfaction of serving the needs of others? Are you willing and ready to face your fears?

Keep in mind that your attitude is an inward feeling expressed by your outward behavior. We were placed on this earth not merely to survive but to live, to savor every moment of life as a gift.

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ATTITUDE ADJUSTMENT ADVICE

What personal shifts can you make to renew your attitude and become a service leader?

CHANGE THIS ATTITUDE

- I need to be served.
- I am unsure of my life's purpose.
- I issue commands and control others.
- I act passively with others.
- I fear failure.
- I always do the popular thing.
- I need to be pushed.
- I am driven by deadlines.
- I am unable to set boundaries.

ADOPT THIS ATTITUDE

- I enjoy serving others.
- I know my purpose.
- I inspire and collaborate with others.
- I employ good communication skills.
- I have the courage to take risks.
- I always do the right thing.
- I am self-disciplined and focused.
- I am motivated by desire and passion.
- I have clearly defined boundaries.

FEAR NOT

Overcome your fears with these simple steps:

1. Make a list of things you have always wanted to do but been afraid to try.
2. Consciously decide to stop being complacent. Make a definitive plan to try at least two of the activities you have been putting off.
3. Define what specific fear has been responsible for your not following through on these activities. Consider what the worst possible scenario would be in each fearful situation. Determine how likely that outcome is and whether you feel the situation is worth the risk. If it is, then go for it!