

WHAT IT MEANS TO HAVE A POSITIVE MENTAL ATTITUDE

by David E. Hartl

Having a "positive mental attitude" has been associated with everything from achieving success in business to overcoming serious physical disease. Teachers, preachers, and all manner of motivational speakers have been extolling the values of having a positive mental attitude for years. Psychology and medicine have their advocates for and a positive mental attitude. There appears to be accumulating evidence that feeling joyful, whole, and loving stimulates the body to create biochemical responses producing a feeling of well being and health much as feeling anxious, fractured and fearful stimulates the now well known "fight-flight" biochemical responses associated with distress and disease. Additionally, ones attitude is often easily perceived by others and can even be contagious, for good or ill. This can impact leadership effectiveness and teamwork in organizations and groups of all kinds.

Well, suppose you were to take all of the evidence and advocates seriously and decide to adopt a living, breathing, honest-to-goodness, positive mind set. How would you have to live, think, and feel to achieve that? Here's the question:

WHAT DOES IT MEAN, DAY-TO-DAY AND MOMENT-BY-MOMENT, TO HAVE A POSITIVE MENTAL ATTITUDE?

IT MEANS...

...YOUR SELF-TALK, THE TALK THAT GOES ON SILENTLY IN YOUR MIND, IS UP BEAT, CONFIDENT, AND HAPPY. Whenever it begins to get you feeling down, you substitute positive thoughts and refuse to allow the negative to prevail, no matter all the "good reasons" there are for having the negative thoughts.

...YOUR CONVERSATION WITH OTHERS IS ABOUT HAPPINESS, GOOD HEALTH, SUCCESS, AND PROSPERITY Whenever the conversation tends toward becoming a "gripe session," you substitute words that speak of happiness, good health, success, and prosperity and refuse to be a party to conversations that dwell on things that accentuate the negative without looking for positive possibilities.

...YOUR PRIORITIES FOCUS YOUR ENERGY CONSISTENTLY ON CREATING IMPROVEMENTS IN YOUR SELF AND YOUR OWN SITUATION. Whenever criticizing others begins to absorb your energy, you look again at what's really important to you and take the actions that will create improvements in yourself.

...YOUR COUNTENANCE IS ALWAYS CHEERFUL AND YOU GIVE SMILES TO EVERYONE WHO CAN SEE YOUR FACE. Whenever a shadow tends to cross your face, you close your eyes, create a smile in your mind and on your face, stand up straight inside your skin, and open your eyes again to view a world that sees you as only cheerful.

...YOUR FRIENDS ALL KNOW THAT YOU REGARD THEM AS IMPORTANT AND THAT THEY HAVE SOMETHING SPECIAL IN THEM. Whenever you know a friend is feeling put down or unhappy, you find ways to help them rediscover their wonderfulness.

...YOUR OPTIMISM IS SO STRONG THAT IT HAS AWAY OF COMING TRUE OVER AND OVER AGAIN. Whenever events seem to be going awry, you look for the sunshine that lights up opportunities and new possibilities in every circumstance.

...YOUR EXPECTATIONS OF YOURSELF AND OTHERS ALWAYS FOCUS ON THE BEST THAT CAN BE. When less than the best occurs, you examine your expectations to see if they were, in fact, fulfilled. [Sometimes deep expectations can be sneaky in their influence.] If you found you got what you expected, you change what you expect to make it nothing less than the best, and act again. If you were truly disappointed, you quickly move beyond disappointment and create action while expecting to get results that truly are the best that can be.

...YOUR ENTHUSIASM FOR THE SUCCESSES OF OTHERS IS UNBOUNDED. Whenever the feelings of jealousy or envy arise in you, they get the patient grin reserved for old "bad friends" that you have learned to ignore and are passed over in favor of delight for another's good fortune.

...YOUR MEMORY IS SHORT FOR YOUR OWN PAST MISTAKES AND THE MISTAKES OF OTHERS. When remembering mistakes seems important, your memory is only for the positive lessons you can find, and then you drop the remembering and press on toward greater achievement in the future.

...YOUR PERSPECTIVE ON LIFE IS LARGE ENOUGH TO ENFOLD EVERY CIRCUMSTANCE AND SUBSTITUTE RESOLVE FOR FEAR, FORGIVENESS FOR ANGER, AND HAPPINESS FOR WORRY. When circumstances appear to be overwhelming, you can remember to take a deep breath, give yourself a hug, and persist.

Having a positive mental attitude isn't a naïve, Pollyanna viewpoint. It's a tough-minded discipline, a habit you create for yourself through focus and repetition. What's amazing is how quickly you begin reaping benefits after you adopt the positive focus. And, if in one moment you lose your positive focus, you can instantly have it back again – right now. Abe Lincoln once said, "People are about as happy as they make up their minds to be." How are you making up your mind?