

# YOU Choose YOUR Attitude

The single most important factor in our stress level is OUR attitude. The attitude we bring to a situation has a huge impact on how we see and react to each of the situations we face. This has a direct impact on our stress level. The attitude that we bring is evident in our self-talk, that little voice inside our head!

Our attitude acts like a lens through which we 'see' situations. I am sure that you will have heard the classic story where two people witnessing the same car accident, report seeing different things. Your attitude acts as a filter and therefore has a huge impact on how we 'see' events.

Many people believe our attitude is caused directly by outside influences like unpleasant experiences or negative people. They see their attitude as a direct result or consequence of what happens to them. They see it as a simple *cause and effect* relationship. As a result of this mind-set, they ride a roller-coaster of emotions every day! When good things happen they feel great, when bad things happen they feel terrible. For example:-

They start the day feeling tired because they didn't sleep well.

*self talk = "Today's going to be a bad day!"*

They grumble at their partner, who grumbles back!

*"See I told you so!"*

They can't find their car keys.

*"I hate my life!"*

Someone let's them merge into the traffic.

*"What a lovely day!"*

Someone's parked in their usual spot.

*"I hate them – they're just doing it to upset*

*me!"*

A colleague makes a nice comment on their haircut

*"I love working here! People are so*

*thoughtful!"*

The supervisor reminds them of the form that's overdue

*"People are so demanding around here"*

We need to be careful NOT to allow our attitude to be totally dependent on the events that happen to us. While external pressures may trigger our feelings, we are the ones who then reflect the impact of those events in our attitude. We can either be subservient to the external events, few of which we have any control over, or we can take charge of our attitude and our response to the situations we face.

"Choosing your attitude" means monitoring your self-talk, being aware of your attitude and making your own choice about how much impact situations have on your attitude. Once you accept that you have some choice in your attitude at this moment, you can decide whether to keep it or shape it into an attitude that brings you more satisfaction.

It doesn't mean that you always have to put on a happy face. Sometimes angry or sad are what's called for. Be aware of what your attitude is, and that it does affect you and others.

**You control your attitude, not the other way around.**

## Key points

Your attitude affects your stress

You have a choice in your attitude

Monitor your self-talk and be aware of your attitude

Keep perspective

Consistent people are 'low maintenance'

You control your attitude, not the other way around

Learn to ignore what you can't control, and learn to control what you can.

Dr Peter Hanson  
*The Joy of Stress*

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