

## Focus on YOUR Attitude

By, Alan W. Goff

After I deliver a presentation about attitude and motivational principles, quite often someone from the audience will approach me to say how much they believe in the importance of attitude. That person will then say something like, "You know who really needs this talk on Attitude? My (insert name here) is so negative, and I just can't get him/her to change."

You'd be amazed how often this happens. The names change but the stories are much the same. Their spouse, their child, their good friend... someone else – always someone else - needs an attitude adjustment. As they speak about their "negative" family member or friend, I can see and feel their frustration.

On the surface, helping someone become more positive sounds like a very kind and thoughtful, even noble, undertaking. But first impressions can be deceiving. What I've found over the years is that the person trying to "fix" someone else's attitude is doing so for a reason. Sure, they want to help the other person. I don't doubt that. However, there's usually more at play.

Those trying to influence someone else's attitude frequently do so because it creates a distraction from their own personal growth journey. In other words, by spending time and energy changing someone else's attitude, you won't have the opportunity to work on your own attitude and growth. After all, you say to yourself, "How can I go out and work on my dreams when I first have to change this other person?"

### It's Hard Enough to Change Your Own Attitude

Most people who want to improve their attitude don't develop a dynamic, positive attitude overnight. It takes time and a great deal of discipline. Like any new habit, it doesn't feel comfortable at the beginning. I've found that the three most difficult tasks in life are:

- Changing someone else's attitude
- Changing your own attitude
- Removing the cellophane wrapper from a new CD

All kidding aside, try to remember that you don't control the personal growth of another human being. Somehow, we think our mission is to teach the principles of positive living to others so they can lead a better life. And yes, it's true that if others practiced these principles, they would be happier and more successful. Yet we don't get to dictate someone else's thoughts or actions. The other person's life is his or her life - not yours.

What you would do if you were "in their shoes" is irrelevant. Each person has dominion over his or her attitude and actions. As I see it, we must respect each person's right to think and act as they please.

You don't need distractions that make your own journey of personal development more difficult. When you're trying to fix someone else's attitude, you're creating obstacles to your success.

## Why You Create Distractions

At this point, you might be thinking, "Why on earth would I create a distraction to sabotage my own personal growth?" To put it simply, you're afraid of where your journey of personal growth might take you. When we experience fear, we often back away from the fear to stay in our "comfort zone."

When you begin to develop a better attitude and to explore your potential, a part of you is excited. You're waking up to new possibilities. It's full speed ahead, or so you think. Despite your initial optimism, however, a part of you wonders what will happen to your existing friendships and relationships if you move forward boldly in your life.

You speculate (at least on a subconscious level) that some people will not accept the "new" you. Fears arise that you might damage those relationships or even "lose" them. As a result, you seek something to derail your growth—a distraction or project that will keep you where you are.

A part of you also wonders what will happen if you are happier and more successful. What demands will life place upon me? Will I be able to handle my new success? Once again, a fear of the unknown. In response to fear, we often find a way to retreat.

Please understand that this article is not about refusing to help others. It's great to share a positive message or a book or audio program that you feel will help someone to lead a better life. I would encourage you to keep doing that.

It only becomes a problem when the other person doesn't seem open to your gesture or intent, and then you decide that you are going to "convert" this person to a positive way of thinking no matter what it takes! That's when you cross the line into something that won't serve either of you.

## A Better Strategy

If you find yourself trying to "convert" other people to a more positive way of living, first acknowledge this. Don't get defensive about it or deny it. Be honest, but also easy on yourself.

Next, re-direct the focus to your own life. Concentrate on the thoughts, feelings, and actions that will move you forward. Accept that at times during your journey you will become afraid, and that change may make you uncomfortable in the short term. Have the courage to confront these fears and to embrace change. You'll find that you have what it takes to overcome these feelings.

When you keep the focus on developing your own attitude - and then put your attitude into action - a strange, wonderful thing will happen. You'll have more influence to affect the attitudes of other people!

You see, it is your positive example that has the most impact on others. Your words alone will not convince them. But when you practice being positive and confronting your fears, others will see the positive changes in your life... and they will want to know what you're doing so that they, too, can enjoy these same benefits.