

## LESSON 1

# Attitude

The great Spanish philosopher José Ortega y Gasset said that human beings are the only creatures on Earth that are born into a natural state of disorientation with our world. Every other creature is guided by instincts that they are not aware of and cannot question. In contrast, we human beings have the power to create our own life. We do just that every day with everything we do; what we do, think and believe determines the shape and substance of our futures.

For some people, what they do, think and believe leads them to incredible achievements and rewards. Most people end up in a kind of middle-ground where they tend to do what others are doing without questioning their path. For others, their actions and the ideas they adopt lead to frustration and problems as they find themselves on the lower rungs of the socioeconomic ladder.

Earl Nightingale, who wrote extensively about human character development and motivation, points out that success or failure as a human being is not a matter of luck, or circumstance, or fate, or of breaks, or who you know, or any other myths and clichés which some people use as excuses. It's a matter of following a common sense paradigm of rules. I call this understanding **Natural Intelligence™** and they are guidelines that anyone can follow.

The ideas in this program, The Mindset, will change lives. They will bring about success stories, create successful people, save careers, even

marriages. The rules explained in *The Mindset* don't change; they apply to any situation and all circumstances. You'll never need to ask "What will work in this situation?" because these ideas apply in all scenarios. But the vital first step that you **must** take is to make these ideas your own, beginning with what Nightingale called the magic word: attitude.

Everybody wants good results from life, whether our home or work life, or in our interactions with others. We're a social species. And you can achieve the good results you want day-in- day-out throughout your life with a healthy attitude – it's the single most important factor.

Nightingale defines attitude as "The position or bearing as indicating action, feeling or mood". How we act shapes how others act. Our attitude tells the world what we expect in return. If we approach the world with a cheerful attitude, expecting positive things from the world, it tells everyone we come into contact with that we expect the best in our dealings with them and the world. We tend to live up to our expectations and others, in return, give back what we expect in terms of their attitude.

We can control our attitude. Each morning we can decide the attitude we want to take out into the day. We do it every day whether we realise it or not, it's just that most of us don't do it consciously and reflectively. Everyone around us – our family, friends, colleagues – reflect back the attitude we present to them. Therefore our attitude towards life determines life's attitude towards us. It's a matter of cause and effect, a theme that we'll come back to through these *12 lessons*. Everything we say or do will generate a corresponding effect. When we're cheerful, people reflect good cheer back; we become the kind of person others enjoy being around.

You and I are responsible for our lives. We produce causes throughout each day of our lives. The world will repay us with an effect corresponding to our attitude. In this way each of us determines the quality of her or his own life. We get back from the world what we put out into the world.

You can tell the kind of attitude you generally go out into the world with quite easily. Consider how people tend to respond to you. Are you met with smiles and friendly greetings? How you answer that question will reveal your past attitude.

A great attitude gets great results, a good attitude good results and so on. So, each of us shapes our own life and, to a great extent, the quality, or the lack of quality of our lives is determined by our day-to-day attitude.

Knowing the impact that our attitude has, surely all of us therefore would want to go into the world each day with the best attitude? It sounds easy but learning a new habit takes time. Neuroplasticity, our brain's ability to learn, to replace old habits with new ones, means that we can all learn new, better habits. Once your new attitude becomes a habit and part of your life, your world will change dramatically, like walking out of darkness into the bright light of day.

Most people never think about their attitudes at all; most people start each day in neutral with an attitude that is neither good nor bad. Rather than deliberately choosing their attitude they react to whatever stimuli they encounter. If the day goes well, their attitude reflects that. If things go badly, their attitude reflects that. These people are not in control of their attitude (the cause) or, as a result, what they will get back from the world (the effect). Everything in life is action and reaction. We can't afford to leave what we get from the world to chance, that's why it's so important for us to control OUR attitudes, to make sure they're excellent or good.

A student with a poor attitude towards learning, won't learn much. The defeatist attitude that something is too hard, that they can't do it (or get it as many young people say) is self-fulfilling. If we start with the attitude that we can't do something, we generally won't do it. Approach a task with an attitude of failure and you're beaten before you start.

William James of Harvard, the founder of psychology in America said: "Human beings can alter their lives by altering their attitudes of mind". Since I learned this valuable piece of wisdom, two words have shaped my attitude and worked well for me: **gratitude** and **expectant**. We can also say **generosity** and **curiosity**.

Gratitude means I'm thankful for the chance to live on this incredible planet. Each day I wake up with a sense of gratitude. Expectant means that I expect the best. I expect to reach the goals I establish for myself, my family, wider communities and Regent Group, which we'll talk a lot more

about later in the program. It's not about expecting that I will be given something for nothing rather that, because I know the world will give me back what I put out there in terms of my attitude, that it's up to me and I'm responsible. By approaching the day with an expectant attitude, I am open to achieving those goals I desire. It's cause and effect, action and reaction.

Earl Nightingale explains it well and I think his words are worth sharing:

“There are millions of human beings living old, dark, and frustrated lives, living defensively, simply because they take a defensive, doubtful attitude towards themselves, and as a result towards life in general. A person with a poor attitude becomes a magnet for unpleasant experiences. When those experiences come, as they must because of these attitudes, they tend to reinforce this poor attitude, thereby bringing more problems and so on. The person becomes an example of self-generating, doom-fulfilling prophecy, and it's all a matter of attitude. We get what we expect, and our outlook on life is a kind of paintbrush, and with it we paint our world: it can be bright and filled with hope and satisfaction, or it can be dark and gloomy.

“It's hard to convince people sometimes that the world they experience reflects their attitude. They take the attitude that if people would only be nice to them, they'd be nice in return. They're like the person who's sitting in front of a cold stove waiting for the heat. Until they put in some fuel, there's not going to be any warmth, it's up to them to act first. It must start somewhere: let it begin with us.

“Attitude reflects the person inside. Consider for a moment those people who go sailing through life from one success to another and who, when they occasionally fail at something, shrug it off and head right out again. No matter what a person does, wherever you find a person doing an outstanding job and getting outstanding results, you'll find a person with a good attitude. These people take the attitude that they CAN accomplish what they set out to accomplish.

“They take the attitude that achievement is the natural order of things – and it is! That there's no good reason on earth why they can't be as successful, as competent as anyone else. They have a healthy attitude

towards themselves and, as a result, towards life and the things they want to accomplish.

“And because of that, they accomplish remarkable things, they are called successful and outstanding and brilliant and lucky, and so on. They’re quite frequently no smarter or more talented than most people, but they have the right attitude. They find their accomplishments not too difficult, simply because it seems so few others are really trying, or really believe in themselves. As for luck, forget it. Luck is what happens when preparedness meets opportunity, and opportunity is there all the time.

“A person can be very efficient at his or her work, but if they don’t have an excellent attitude, well, the person’s a failure. A robot can do a great job, but only a human being can ennoble work with a great attitude and, by so doing, touch it with the magic of humanness, make it come alive and sing, make it truly worthwhile.

“Successful people come in all sizes, shapes, ages, and colours, and in widely varying degrees of intelligence and education. But they have one thing in common: they expect more good out of life than bad. They expect to succeed more often than they fail, and they do.

“There are things you want, worthwhile things. Take the attitude that there are a lot more reasons why you CAN reach those goals than there are reasons to fear trying. Go after them! Work at it. Keep your attitude positive, cheerful, and expectant, and you’ll achieve them. And as you do, you’ll grow to new heights and be able to accomplish still more. And remember this: Our environment, the world in which we find ourselves living and working, is a mirror of our attitudes and expectations. If we feel that our environment could stand some improvement, we can bring about that change for the better by improving our attitude. The world plays no favourites; it’s impersonal. It doesn’t care who succeeds or who fails, nor does it care if we change. Our attitude towards life doesn’t affect the world and the people in it nearly so much as it affects us.

“It would be impossible to even estimate the number of jobs that have been lost, promotions or good grades missed, sales lost or marriages ruined, by poor attitudes. But you can number in the millions the jobs which are held

but hated, the marriages which are tolerated but unhappy, the parents and children who fail to understand and love one another, all because of people who are waiting for the world and others to change towards them. They don't understand that what they're getting is a reflection of themselves. Nothing can change until we do. When we change, our worlds will change. The answer is attitude."

I personally follow Nightingale's advice for how to make sure you have a good attitude and recommend you do the same. In the same way you'd develop any new habit, cultivating your habit of approaching each day with an excellent attitude takes practice. Try sticking a post-it note on the bathroom mirror with **attitude** written on it so you'll see it every morning before going out into the world. You might have another one in your car and another at work, perhaps even a reminder on your phone. Make a commitment to smile more, to speak to people more, to reach out to people more. Everything in the world we want to do has to be done through people. Every pound you'll ever earn comes at some point from people. Everything worthwhile in life is to do with people; our relationships with partners, friends, our children all involve us interacting with human beings. Each of them, our children included, is an individual, unique and different from any other person who ever lived. Our attitude affects them, what they see and feel when we're around. Make it the best it can be; love and kindness.

When you develop an attitude that says YES to life and the world, you'll start to see changes that astonish you. Someone once said "Life is dull only to dull people" and it's true in the same way that it's true that life is interesting only to interesting people, and life is successful only for successful people. We get what we expect, what we put out into the world and must embody what we want. For success to come to us we must radiate success. In terms of attitude, we have to become the people we want to be. Cause and effect, action and reaction.

Many years ago, a famous Los Angeles restaurateur was asked by a newspaper reporter, "When did you become successful?" And he replied: "I was successful when I first started. I knew what I wanted to do and I knew I'd do it. It was only a matter of time." His attitude was one of

success long before he'd achieve the success he wanted. The great German philosopher and writer Goethe explained it like this: "Before you can do something, you must be something."

Nightingale challenges us to an exercise to demonstrate what attitude can achieve. It's an exercise I've done and I recommend that you try it too because it delivers. Complete the exercise conscientiously every day, focus on it and you'll become 'lucky' (as the uninitiated call it) and wonderful things will start happening in your life.

The exercise is to treat every person you come into contact with as the most important person on Earth.

There are three reasons for doing this.

Firstly, as far as each of us is concerned, we are the most important person on Earth.

Secondly, because it's the way human beings should treat each other.

And finally, because you'll start to build an important habit.

Everyone wants and needs good self-esteem. Everyone wants to feel that they're important, that they're recognised and needed, that they count, that they're respected. Make people feel this and they'll give you their respect and their business, even if it's a brief interaction.

Nightingale observed, and I agree, that the higher you go in any organisation of value, the nicer the people seem to become. It works this way: the more senior the people, the easier it is to talk to them, to get on with them, and work with them. But their great attitudes aren't because of their positions, they have their positions largely because of their great attitudes.

For the purposes of the exercise, act towards others in the way that you want people to act towards you. Treat your friends and family as the very important people that they are, the most important in the world. Each morning take the kind of attitude you'd have if you were the most successful person on Earth into the world. It will quickly become a habit. Almost immediately you'll notice a change. Things that used to frustrate

you won't any more. When someone gives you a hard time, don't let their bad attitude ruin your great attitude. Keep control of your attitude, keep it good, keep smiling. If someone cuts in front of your car or pushes in front of you to get onto the train, don't respond with the same; smile and keep your great attitude.

Negative emotions including anger, hatred and jealousy hurt you. They make your life miserable and can even make you ill. Look after yourself by forgiving anyone who has ever hurt you, truly forgive them and forgive yourself. What's past is past. Dwelling on it, going over it, can only harm you. Forgive and forget, move on, you're above such pettiness.

As you get into the habit of having a great attitude, you'll hopefully see that you've started on the path to achieving what you want. You've begun the journey. How successful you've been up to this point doesn't matter – you'll be pleased with the ease with which you move towards your new life.

Other people's attitudes – good and bad – are infectious. It's important to see them in this way and avoid poor and bad attitudes in the same way as you'd avoid an infectious illness. You must keep yourself healthy.

Whoever first said "Life's too short" had a point. Life is too short to spend precious time apeing other people's attitudes – unless they're good. Approaching life with a great attitude feels good – the world feels brighter. But it does more than that. A great attitude seems to open up new opportunities that we couldn't see before we changed our attitude. This might explain why people say we're 'lucky'. Yes opportunities or 'breaks' seem to come to us, but they come because of the new connection with the world we've created by having a great attitude. With a great attitude we do more and do it in less time. Our great attitude has put us on the path of positive happenings.

By developing a great attitude you put yourself in the top 5% of people, the most successful people on Earth. Your great attitude has started you on the path to achieving your goals. Having prepared the ground now you only have to plant the seed.



**There are several points in my life when I could have slipped into a less than excellent attitude. I arrived in the UK as a refugee from the civil war in Sri Lanka. I had just £100 in my pocket. I wanted to study but didn't have the funds to pursue most courses. Studying accountancy was available to me and I approached it with an attitude of gratitude and expectation: gratitude that I was on a path that would improve my life and expectation that I could turn it into the life I wanted. And my attitude helped me to graduate, become a chartered accountant and work in investment management for several leading companies.**

*To sum up:*

First, it's your attitude, how you set out to tackle a difficult task, more than anything else, that will achieve a successful outcome.

Secondly, humans are interdependent. Our attitudes towards others shape their attitudes towards us. Our success in life depends on how well we relate to others. It's cause and effect, action and reaction.

Thirdly, to achieve the kind of life you want, you must think, act, talk and behave how the person you want to be would. Visualise that person regularly through the day; what are they saying and doing?

Fourthly, remember that the higher you go in any organisation of value, the better the attitudes you'll see and that these attitudes are not the result of success but success is the result of the attitudes.

And finally, human beings, including our loved ones and everyone we come into contact with, need recognition and self-esteem. They need to be needed, to feel important, to be recognised and appreciated. Help the people you meet to feel this.

So that these ideas become a habit and part of your life, follow these suggestions:

We're not good at holding more than one thought at a time in our minds so choose constructive and positive ideas. Look out for the best in people and ideas, especially ideas you can make good use of in your life.

Talking about your problems or health to people who can't help is a waste of your time and theirs. Avoid it.

Send an attitude of well-being and confidence out into the world. Show the world that you know where you're going and good things will happen.

Treat everyone you meet and interact with as the most important person on the planet. If you can make this a habit and practice it consistently, you'll see the benefits all of your life.

**Find somewhere visible you can put a reminder to shape your attitude into a great one. It could be a post-it note on the mirror, your phone screensaver or a reminder that comes up several times a day. After two days reflect on the following:**

*How many times a day have you reminded yourself to set a great attitude? How could you increase that number? Think about what barriers you've faced in setting a great attitude.*

*How is your attitude now different to your attitude before? Have you changed your attitude enough? Could you do more?*

*What changes have you noticed as a result of going into the world with a new, better attitude? If you haven't noticed any changes why do you think that is? What can you change?*

*Describe a scenario where you treated someone as the most important person on Earth. What did you notice? (Think about how you felt as well as the other person's response)*