

CHAPTER 2

ATTITUDE

My dad used to say that our attitude is defined as who we are and how we act, including the feelings and the moods we have. He said our attitude is comprised of our actions, feelings and mood. If you have a good attitude, people will always respond to you in the same way. Likewise, if you have a bad attitude, you will probably get the same in return.

That is something that has made a big impression on me. Realistically, you do not necessarily take everything that your parents tell you seriously, but it has long been in my subconscious mind. Dad talked about how we live in different plains and the physical body is just how we come in and go out. He said that we have all been given an intellect that is not necessarily given to animals, so we are different. Obviously, animals can see, hear, smell, taste and touch, exactly like humans, but problems arise for humans when we live relying on our senses rather than our intellect, even though those are a beautiful part of our functionality.

The other space that we live in is this non-form, where our thoughts are gathered. You create your thoughts through your intellect and then you can turn them into actions. This is the whole idea about attitude that I would like to expand here.

Our attitude towards life, which will determine life's attitude towards us, is a particularly important thing that we need to understand and is something that Earl Nightingale talked about. At the time when we were growing up – Neil Armstrong went to the moon in 1967 and I was born in 1970 – Dad always used to talk about the will that individuals like Neil Armstrong had. The rocket that they sent to the moon was less powerful than the handheld devices that we all carry around with us today, so it was amazing.

Nightingale wrote that each of us shapes our own lives and that shape is determined by our attitude; the attitude that we hold most of the time. That sounds simple, but it is not easy. For most of us, learning to have the right attitude takes time, but once it is mastered, our daily lives will be transformed as if we are walking out of a dark tunnel into the bright, clear light of day.

At the moment, I am revisiting the writing of Ralph Waldo Emerson, who said things like, 'Let him learn the prudence of a higher strain; let him learn that everything in nature, even dust and feathers, go by law and not by luck.' My father used to say that, perhaps in quite different language, and often in Tamil, but the essence was the same.

My dad used to talk about the fact that human beings can alter their lives by altering their attitudes. In virtually everything you read, people talk about human beings altering their lives by altering

their attitudes. I did not fully grasp that until recently, but I can now relate to it.

If we are to expand this idea further, we can expand by thinking about what attitude means. Dad used to talk about thoughts, feelings and actions and I now understand. My own research puts that nicely into a diagram, which was drawn by Dr Truman Fleet and explained in my previous book, *Thinking into Character*. We call it the stick person, and it shows how there are two types of mind: the conscious mind and the subconscious mind, and then the body, which is a function of the mind. What goes through the subconscious mind is completely deducted and then the body knows, and we have no way of stopping that and we go with the flow.

‘Our environment and the world we have created around us is really a mirror of our attitude,’ Nightingale said. If we do not like our environment, we can change it by changing our attitudes. The world keeps no favourites, it is impartial, and it is impersonal. It does not care who succeeds and who fails, nor does it care whether we change or not. Our attitude towards life does not affect the world and the people in it nearly as much as it affects us. My dad must have said this many, many times on many occasions when I was doing various things. When I was sad, he would tell me there was no point, because it would affect me more than others.

‘It would be impossible to underestimate the number of opportunities missed because of poor attitude,’ Nightingale said. That is a true reflection of what *The Power of Learning from DAD* is really helping me with. As I’m writing this chapter, I actually lost my

mother eight years ago to this day, on 28 April, 2012. As a child, my mum and dad were incredibly close to me and they gave me a hugely happy life in Sri Lanka before the war took all of that away. The poor attitudes of those wartime leaders meant many opportunities were missed.

My dad talked a lot about a good attitude coming from a positive outlook on life. If you have never tried it, you will be amazed at what happens. It is important to remember that actions are your feelings, and just as we feel, we act. Dad put a huge emphasis on that, and that is something that I have come to rely upon.

My dad read lots of philosophy and used to tell me that before you can do something, you must first *be* something. Some people just seem to always be successful. You think, ‘how is this happening and what can we learn?’ Dad used to tell me that if you consciously go about the test, you will see. The right attitude is to entertain positive mental thinking in your conscious mind. You impress upon your subconscious mind and then your body gives the action and the action then creates the reaction, which is the basis of success. That is the law of laws; the law of cause and effect. That is where attitude comes in and the result changes, your circumstances change, and you become a better, happier person.

Let me share some storytelling to illustrate the point.

Whenever there was any disagreement or argument between my mum and dad, Dad always took the attitude of not reacting. He would respond, but I never saw him get angry in my life. He was always incredibly calm, while mum was perhaps slightly fiery and would

get into arguments with him. But he was incredibly calm, he always looked at things in a vastly different way and it was very difficult to shake him. Any problems, any issues that arose, he was rock solid and would take it as it came and practically deal with a situation in the best possible way.

He always talked about reaction and response. I think I have heard that from Bob Proctor a couple of times. Bob and Dad were born in the same year, 1934. Now, when Bob teaches these things, I wish that I had listened more to what my father was saying. I didn't appreciate it, but now I can appreciate how valuable that teaching was. In particular, he talked about reacting and responding, and that if you react you are effectively losing control and allowing the other person to take control of you. But when you respond, you maintain control.

In one of the seminars in the United States, Bob said that and my heart leapt with happiness to hear my father's thoughts in that way; even though I was also a little disappointed with myself. Dad was saying that when I was a child, but I only appreciated it more recently,

So, individuals with a low level of consciousness react to conditions or circumstances. People with a high level of awareness respond. The higher the level of consciousness, the greater the awareness of the laws that govern this beautiful universe. It is absolutely a scientific basis. It is the law. You can agree or disagree, but things will happen based on your thoughts.

'Act towards others and the world at large in exactly the same manner that you want the world and others to act toward you,' Bob

Proctor said. Dad also said, many, many times, that we should always treat the members of our family as the people they really are, the most important people in our lives. And Nightingale said, 'Each morning, carry out into the world the kind of attitude you'd have if you were the most successful person on earth. Notice how quickly it develops into a habit. Almost immediately, you'll notice a change.'

There will be frustrations along the way and it all may disappear; it is incredibly hard. I am also still learning this material. I'm learning from what my dad said, but I am personally nowhere near perfection. I am just thinking about it.

Some less informed person will give you a bad time, but stay on track. When someone cuts in front of you in the car, have you reacted and got annoyed? Dad would ask, why are you getting to their level; don't permit yourself, don't let their unhappiness make you unhappy. What beautiful words. He would just drive and if people did things to him, nothing really bothered him. Mum used to say to him, 'do you ever get annoyed?' On the few occasions that I saw him irritated he would very quickly regain his composure.

Another story: I used to play cricket when I was younger, and I loved it. Obviously, the war and the unrest took away many of opportunities that we would normally have had at our age. But nevertheless, we would play these important matches, and Dad always told us just to make sure we practised, and then he talked about calming the mind and not doing anything. When you are walking on to the pitch, just think that you are the best batsman, never look at the bowler, only concentrate on the ball. He may be the best bowler and other people

are developing their own skills, but you need to concentrate on yourself rather than anybody else. That really taught me a huge lesson in terms of improving.

I have had the good fortune of speaking to various successful sports personalities, including cricketers, from all parts of the world. Most of them share this view and have the picture in their mind that they are the best. Thoughts become things. As Bob Proctor says, ‘If you can see it in your mind, you can hold it in your hand.’

And then the only reason you will get caught out is if for a moment you think you are not going to hit a run and the ball will hit the wicket or someone will catch it, and a moment of weakness comes. It is incredibly hard to practise and incredibly hard to learn, but that is where discipline comes in. Discipline is not someone telling you what to do, but about you giving yourself commands and following them. So, your discipline means making sure you do not think about anything except hitting the ball.

Then Dad talked about always thinking in a growth way. Consequently, I did a lot of research and was fortunate enough to meet Dr Carol Dweck from the University of Stanford. She has written a beautiful book called *Mindset – How You Can Fulfil Your Potential*. I would encourage you to read it. It talks about the growth mindset and the fixed mindset and Dad talked about that too, albeit in a very basic manner. The essence of what he said was the same as what Carol talked about – the growth mindset is about believing that you will always learn, you are willing to learn and you are not the best. The fixed mindset effectively says I am learned, I know it all. In fact, those

people with a growth mindset learn and succeed in their lives much, much more than those with a fixed mindset.

Some of these theories and practices, including the growth mindset idea, were taken on by Satya Nadella, the CEO of Microsoft. He took the company, at the time of writing this book, to be the second largest company in the world. Nadella says his thinking changed by reading Dr Carol Dweck's book and he took that to work and made a huge change.

These concepts are all out there, they are not new to this book, but it is especially important that people relate to these things in different ways. For me, I'm relating my studies over the past five or six years; I met Professor Clay Christensen and Clay said to me that I have to understand the laws of nature and the fact that man-made laws are not going to get me anywhere. That was when the whole thing started to come together, and then I lost Dad, and I started to figure out what I needed to do.

Dad also said the answers are all out there, we just need to ask the right questions. I believe that is an Oscar Wilde quote. It is vitally important – framing the question and discussing your opinion provides you with a huge amount of success, whatever it is you want to achieve.

So, in terms of other stories that relate to attitude: my dad lost his parents and he was incredibly close to them, so at that time his emotions were raw. He was not necessarily that emotional – I could understand, because when I lost him, I was devastated for most of a year. Nevertheless, I think he was able to appreciate this conscious message that this body is just a piece of molecular structure, something comes in for a life and then it goes out.

He loved his mother so much and then we became refugees and left Sri Lanka. We were in Vancouver, Canada, that particular year when grandmother passed away. However, as refugees, we were scared to go back to the country where we were born at that time and so he couldn't return. He waited until she was cremated and literally meditated at the side of the room. It was quite interesting to see the way he dealt with it. The next morning, he showered and came back and kept going. It's amazing how he dealt with that and his attitude was always, always positive.

I just want to highlight one or two things. First, we must always make sure our thoughts are constructive and positive. Look for the best thoughts and ideas; be constantly alert for new ideas you can put into life. He was always positive and looked for the positive in people. He often repeated the popular saying of not considering a glass to be half empty, but half full. That is something now embedded into my psyche. I used to use it all the time when I was younger and I still use it, not always, because it is still in my conscious mind, but I am developing, and I am improving every time. When I look at something and I get a fixed mindset or a negative idea, I tell myself to shift to the other side. Clearly this is something he was thinking and explaining to us a long time ago.

Dad said, 'Do not waste time talking about your problems unless you are talking to a medical doctor.' He had never been to a medical doctor. He died at almost 72 and had never been to a doctor, because he did not bother. It probably will not help you, he thought. He talked about this idea of not wasting time talking about your problems. He said something that sticks with me, 'Do not worry until

the worry worries you.’ He used to say it in the local language, in Tamil, but the essence of it was do not look for the problem, look for solutions. If you think about problems, talk about problems, you will be continuously trapped in problems. He just radiated an attitude of wellbeing and confidence.

Treat everyone as the most important person, as I have said before. Once you start this habit, practise it consistently. I am desperately studying these things every day and putting these things into practice and putting them into my subconscious mind to create a life-changing experience. It is going to help for the rest of my life. By writing *The Power of Learning from DAD*, I believe this is going to help lots of sons and daughters when they pick up the book and read it. It is a story; it is not necessarily lots of facts and figures, but I’m relaying a story and perhaps readers will be able to better relate to their dads, whether they are still alive or not.

I believe also that fathers will pick up this book and read it and perhaps be inspired to share their thoughts more. Dad never wrote down any of his philosophies or beliefs – everything I am talking about here is from my memory – but I’m putting this out there for our daughters. Hopefully it will help them, and it will help lots of other people.

Dad said life is all about giving, and that is not always financial; it is about giving knowledge and experience and helping people think differently. As long as what you give is coming from a position of helping others rather than expecting something back in material rewards, that is what life is about. If it is premeditated and you are

motivated by what you are going to get in return, that will fail because the laws of nature are based on the principle of harmony of thoughts, feelings and actions. If you genuinely give from a positive mental attitude standpoint, with a growth mindset, then nature must by law give back what you are seeking.

Just to finish off, all that a man or woman achieves and all that he or she fails to achieve, is a direct result of his or her inner thoughts. Adjusting and ordering our thinking in certain ways can achieve what we want. A man or a woman's weakness and strength, purity and impurity are his or hers, they do not belong to others. It is about his or her self, and can only be altered by themselves and no one else. Suffering and happiness are evolved from within. This was beautifully put by James Allen in his book *As A Man Thinketh*. Allen also said, 'He thinks, so he is. As he continues to think, so he remains.' Dad said that in a different way, and that is enormously powerful in summing up the power of attitudes.