

ATTITUDE - Have an attitude or Be a(t)titude

Collective attitudes and your top 10 Commandments

As you were growing up, what did you learn about beauty, health, success and wealth from your parents, siblings, teachers, peers, significant others and from your own personal experiences? What attitudes did you assume about parenting, motherhood, being a man or woman, birthing, menstruation, medication, drug use, alternative medicine, medical care, menopause, sexuality, relationships, change, grief, aging, your body...?

Have you ever watched sheep? They typically stick together, follow one another or are shepherded as a group by the farmer and his dog so they can be moved to graze on the same paddock. They stay together as a flock and if one wanders off, it is brought back by the sheep dog. It's a bit like that with attitudes. You are often requested or expected to have the same flock attitude like sheep – everyone thinking and believing the same and staying within the confines of the same paddock.

Consider the current prevalent attitudes of the collectives you belong to. That collective could be your family, professional group, church, sports club or culture, for example. Do you form part of the majority who hold such attitudes or are you out in another paddock? What are your top “ten commandments”? By that I mean, what are your top “Thou Shalts or Thou Shalt Nots” which you closely align to and feel very strongly about? Are they YOUR attitudes or are they ones you have assumed? Do they free you or do they hold you back from living your potential?

Do you feel bound staying within that collective attitude or do you wish to move aside from it? What are the binds and blessings of either staying within that collective, or moving away from it and individuating? It may not be easy to free yourself from the collective attitude of those around you but adopting attitudes that “be YOUR attitude” can be very freeing and will have an ongoing freeing impact in other areas of your life.

Cutting ties – Leaving the flock – Individuating

As a child and teenager you were probably well indoctrinated into having an attitude that “fitted in” with the family, religious, cultural or societal “norms,” or perhaps you chose to rebel and be the sheep that ran away and joined a different flock.

I remember vividly the time I started using the contraceptive pill. The attitude in my family and church group at the time very much determined my “negative and guilt-ridden, hell-going attitude” about sex and contraception. Can you imagine the subsequent guilt that I carried for such a long time on a daily basis when I swallowed that pill, but also when I had my sexual experiences? My attitude that I had assumed from my collectives had impacted my experience. As a grown woman of 40 and after leaving my husband having not had too much prior need for contraception, I had some decisions to make. Can you imagine the guilt that arose when I went to the Family Planning clinic as an adult woman to have an intrauterine contraceptive device fitted? My new awareness however allowed me to know that I could choose a new attitude towards contraception and that by making an informed decision and by differentiating my attitude to that of my family's, then I would no longer need to carry guilt.

So how do you start individuating? Self awareness and self responsibility are key. Start noticing what your attitudes are. Ask yourself, how comfortable am I with these? What would feel “more me”? Align your thoughts, words, emotional state, actions and behaviours with the attitude that you wish to “be”.

Conveying attitude constructively and noticing the effects on your body and your life

Attitude can be conveyed through your thoughts – whether verbalised or not. Non-verbal communication conveys far more than your verbal communication so be mindful of how you communicate attitude – through your posture, pace, facials, gestures and other non-verbal forms of communication.

Attitude is conveyed in your words – spoken or unspoken, your tone and volume, silence or talkativeness, spontaneous remarks or well thought out speeches, written or passed down in oral narration. Back up your constructive thoughts with verbal and written words that build on your positive, empowering attitude.

Emotional expression is a vehicle for attitude. Notice your emotions and check out your underlying attitude. Notice the shifts in your body, mind and soul when you shift your attitude. It seems that attitudes are most noticed when they lie at the extremes of the spectrum. They also have a kind of rightness or wrongness element to them – like a judgement call. In my experience, any downplaying attitudes and judgement “play down” on your body – impacting your health and general wellness.

Decide for yourself what attitudes allow you to experience the life you desire. Play and experiment a little. When you are at peace with your own attitude(s), then your body is more at peace, your life appears more peaceful and things pan out better.

Celebrate or commiserate – different focus leads you down different “sheep” tracks

When my daughters menstruated we celebrated rather than commiserated. My belief is if you see the positive of this experience each month and celebrate the fluctuating nature of your cycle and how you can “work and function best” when you flow with, rather than resist that cycle, you are very fortunate indeed. When you commiserate such a transition – seeing it as “the curse” and focussing on pain, blood and gunk, a nuisance or something to hide, you can deeply entrench these attitudes into yourself and your body, setting the stage for illness, disease or discomfort in your body later on.

Could you celebrate having cancer or some progressive illness? How about redundancy or unemployment? What about losing all or your wealth and livelihood?

The notion of celebrating or commiserating goes across the board when it comes to attitude. You can have an attitude that celebrates, acknowledges, affirms and promotes health and happiness, or you can have one that commiserates, downplays, curses and destroys. How does your attitude manifest itself?

Be an attitude / Beatitude

- beatitude (small b) = supreme blessedness or happiness
- Beatitude = any of the 8 distinctive sayings of Jesus in the Sermon on the Mount in which he declares that (s)he whowill receive blessings from Heaven

Be an attitude that receives blessings and manifests abundance. Be strength. Be courage. Be confidence. Be success. Be acceptance. Be greatness. Be peace. Be calmness. Be your potential. Be your spiritual self.

Embody these qualities and values as they are your true essence. Embody them in who you “be”, not just in what you do because when you “be” these qualities, your life also reflects back to you the blessings of these qualities. You are the blessing, not something outside of yourself and as the writer Anaïs Nin* points out, “We don’t see things as they are. We see things as we are.”

“Happy and blessed am I who...for I ...” How would you complete this?

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*Nin, Anaïs quoted on pp.162 in:

Dowrick, Stephanie (2005) Choosing Happiness Life & Soul Essentials Allen & Unwin, Australia