

CATS RE

Attitude matters: Part 2 of 3

The drive to carry on

When the going gets tough, the tough change their attitude

YESTERDAY, we defined what an attitude is and the part it plays in how you react to various life experiences.

Today's article will discuss why your attitude to life matters.

Most people don't think of getting a driving licence as a test of their attitude, but for Ms Cha Sa-soon, a 69-year-old woman living alone in a remote village in South Korea, it was exactly that!

On Sept 5, 2010, she achieved the distinction of being featured in The New York Times in a story titled: At First She Didn't Succeed, But She Tried And Tried Again.

For three years from 2005, Ms Cha repeatedly failed her driving test, but never gave up.

Finally, after 959 failed attempts, she made it on her 960th try.

When you come across examples of such dogged determination, the following nugget of wisdom from Thomas Jefferson starts to ring true: "Nothing can stop the man with the right mental attitude from achieving his goal; nothing on earth can help the man with the wrong mental attitude."

Does your attitude matter? Think of two types of situations: red and green.

Red situations

Red situations are those in which you are already stuck with your back to the wall – and unless you change your attitude, you can't unstick yourself.

On Dec 9, 1914, a blazing fire destroyed half of Thomas Edison's manufacturing and experimental plant, leaving him with a huge loss of intellectual and physical property.

While watching his years of work go up in flames, Edison, when asked for reaction, said: "Although I am 67 years old, I will start all over again tomorrow. I am pretty well burnt out tonight, but tomorrow I will go right to work to reconstruct the plant."

The evidence from the lives of Edison, Abraham Lincoln, Nelson Mandela, Viktor Frankl and others who have encountered extreme adversity suggests that when they had no control over their outer circumstances, they exercised control over their inner circumstances – by keeping their attitude positive.

After failing repeatedly to get a new job for several months, Jim's attitude starts to play a more important role than his qualifications. Will he keep trying or give up? It boils down to his attitude.

Frustrated and stressed in a stagnant job for several years, will Alice take action to chart

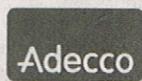
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attitude

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Frustrated and stressed in a stagnant job for several years, will Alice take action to chart

a new course or continue down the same path? It boils down to her attitude.

Having failed multiple times to create a self-sustaining business and with his personal savings gone, will Bill give up his dream or try again? It boils down to his attitude.

As any adverse situation gets more difficult, desperate and hopeless, attitude starts to play a more decisive role in shaping the final outcome.

Green situations

Green situations are those where you are still moving forward and everything looks okay, but sooner or later, you are likely to get stuck

— unless you change your attitude.

Many people go the office unknowingly carrying negative attitude towards the idea of “hard work”.

As a result, they adopt the strategy of deflecting difficult, challenging assignments to weaker colleagues, while staying busy with unchallenging activities within their comfort zone.

Since their situation is not desperate, sustaining a negative attitude towards “hard work” seems practical and even smart.

In the long run, however, if they lose their job or burn out from sheer boredom, they may end up in a very difficult situation.

Having not exercised their abilities, their stock of knowledge and skills will fall short of the level expected of their age group.

Similarly, despite understanding the importance of knowledge and relevant skills in today's competitive world, many people hold a negative attitude towards learning.

Again, the implications may not be felt for many years until one day when they find themselves lacking the knowledge and skills they need to move to another organisation — a classic situation that afflicts many middle-aged professionals.

Red or green, this question remains: “How do you change a situation that you don't like?”

Says American philosopher and psychologist William James: “The greatest discovery of my generation is that human beings can alter their lives by altering their attitudes of mind.”

Next Tuesday: How to change your attitude

Article by Atul Mathur, an engineer and an ACTA-certified trainer. He will be conducting a workshop “Attitude: Your Ultimate Qualification” on May 3. For details, visit www.atulmathur.com or e-mail atul@atulmathur.com

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