**2016 Motivational Minutes on Attitude**

**(Also see Adversity, Gratitude, and Thoughts.)**

1. **Grandma’s Cake**

 ****

**Quote of the day:**

“Experience is a hard teacher because she gives the test first, the lesson afterward.” —Vernon Law

**Reflection:**

*A little boy was telling is Grandma how "everything" is going wrong, at school, and severe health problems in the family. Meanwhile, Grandma is baking a cake. She asks her grandson if he would like a snack, which of course he does.*

*"Here, have some cooking oil," she says. "Yuck" says the boy.*

*"Then how about a couple raw eggs?"*

*"Gross, Grandma!" he replies.*

*"Would you prefer some flour then? Or maybe some baking soda?" she asks.*

*"Grandma, those are all yucky!" he replied.*

*To which Grandma replies: "Yes, all those things seem to taste bad all by themselves. But when they are mixed together in the right amounts and the right manner, they make a delicious cake!"*

*She continued, "God works the same way. Many times we wonder why He would let us go through such bad and difficult times. But God knows that when He puts these things all in His order, they always work for good! We just have to trust Him and, eventually, they will all make something wonderful!"*

Let’s take some advice from Grandma and trust things will work for good.

\*\*

1. **Sun Flowers**

 ****

**Quote of the day:**

"Positive anything is better than negative nothing.” —Elbert Hubbard

**Reflection:**

Isn’t it interesting how sunflowers always turn their face toward the sun? The fact is, they follow the sun across the sky. Experiment with it yourself. Position the sunflower away from the window and you will discover that in a short time the sunflower will resume its original position—facing toward the sun. With amazing persistence the sunflower will refuse to face the darkness. It will insist on always looking toward the light.

Let’s learn a lesson from the sunflower. Let’s not allow ourselves to face toward the gloom and doom of life. Let’s never sit down in the shadows of sorrow and let the night cast the dark shadows of gloom and despair upon us. Let’s turn our faces toward the light. Adversity should serve to make us better and give us renewed skill and power; it should make our hearts softer, our spirits kinder, and give us a more gentle touch. Let’s learn needed lessons, and then go on to experience new love and better service.

Stay positive like the sunflower. Turn away from negativity. Always look toward the positive.

\*\*

1. **Be an "I-feel-great" Person**

 ****

**Quote of the day:**

"The more man meditates upon good thoughts, the better will be his world and the world at large.” —Confucius

**Reflection:**

You and I have been in many situations when someone burst in to the room and said, "I've got news." Immediately this person receives the full attention of everyone present. The point is, sometimes the news they bring *is* good, and yet, sometimes its negative I challenge you to think twice before you “pass on the news”. Good news does more than merely get attention; good news brings good results. Good news results in enthusiasm. Good news even promotes good digestion.

Just because there are more broadcasters of bad news than there are of good news, don't be misled. No one ever won a friend, no one ever made money, and no one ever accomplished anything good by broadcasting bad news.

It's pointless to pass on the bad. Make it a habit to always speak positively! Broadcast good news about life, about others, about situations, about how you feel. Be an "I-feel-great" person. Simply say, "I feel great" at every possible opportunity. If you do, you will feel better. By the same token, telling people, "I feel awful," I guarantee, will make you feel just that—awful! How we *feel* is, in large part, is determined by how we *think* we feel.

Why not determine to be a transmitter of good news? Tell everyone the *good* that happened today. Encourage others—compliment them at every opportunity. Tell them about the positive things that are happening. Recall the amusing, pleasant things you experienced and let the unpleasant things stay buried. Spread good news!

\*\*

1. **One Step At A Time**

 ****

**Quote of the day:**

“The person who says it cannot be done should not interrupt the person doing it.” — Chinese proverb

**Reflection:**

*A teacher took her primary school students to the assembly hall for a lesson with a difference. Standing at the foot of the steps leading up to the stage, she asked, “Is anybody good at jumping?” Quite a few young hands shot up. “Well,” she continued, “could any of you jump from the floor here up onto the stage?” No hands went up this time. “I can,” said the teacher, “and I’ll show you how.” Beginning at the foot of the steps leading up to the stage, she hopped onto the first step. From there she hopped onto the second, and so on until she reached the top.*

Don’t let circumstances defeat you. Many things can only be accomplished little-by-little, and step-by-step. If you find yourself facing a daunting task, and the way ahead looks too steep to climb, just take it one step at a time.

\*\*

1. **Falling Forward**

 ****

**Quote of the day:**

"Our greatest glory is not in never falling, but in rising every time we fall.” — Confucius

**Reflection:**

This story is short, but has a powerful lesson.

*A story is told of an elderly woman who slipped and fell on a busy street. Several people quickly went to assist her, but she was already hoisting herself back up. “I’m all right,” she assured them. “I always fall forwards, never backwards.”*

When we’ve “taken a fall,” instead of dwelling on the mistake or hurt, let’s make it a fall forward by learning from it and looking to the future.

\*\*

1. **Actions Top Intentions**

****

**Quote of the day:**

“You may have the loftiest goals, the highest ideals, the noblest dreams, but remember this, nothing works unless you do.” —Nido Qubein

**Reflection:**

Below is a good story from Mara Hodler that illustrates this quote. It’s something that I have been harping on for the last years–there is no progress without action.

*About 13 years ago, my husband, Sam, and I had to make a trip from Calgary, Alberta, to Winnipeg, Manitoba, in Canada. We loaded up our old truck for the move and headed off. We had planned for this move pretty well. Everything was neatly packed and sorted. We had mapped our route and estimated our time. We had made a budget for gas, food, hotels, and all that. Our intention was most definitely to end up in Winnipeg.*

*On the morning of our departure, we got up early and hit the road on time. Only one problem: We didn’t head east as we were supposed to. We got on the highway and out of habit began heading west. Eventually, the signs for Banff—in the opposite direction of where we were trying to go—alerted us that we might not be going the right way. As soon as we recognized our mistake, we took the first U-turn and began heading in the right direction. We arrived in Winnipeg only slightly delayed. The point isn’t just that Sam and I are directionally challenged, but that it’s the road you’re on, not your intentions, that determines where you end up. We had absolutely no intention of going to Banff and every intention of going to Winnipeg; but regardless, we would have ended up in Banff if we’d stayed on our first route.*

At the end of the day, actions are going to top intentions every single time. Our lives are the sum total of our actions, not our intentions, dreams, or wishes. The lesson is a simple one: pay less attention to intentions. Instead, look at the road you are on. If you want to make it to a different place, get on a different road. Make the connection between your choices and the results in your life. Evaluate and adjust your course accordingly. It’s something we all have to do. Most of us don’t get lost or get on the wrong road on purpose. Rather, we don’t recognize the choices we make every day as choices that get us closer to our destination or take us farther from it. Once that connection is made, it’s easier to adjust the course we’re on to one that will take us to where we want to be.

Are your intentions outweighing your action? Take action today.

1. **Mistakes The Door to Better Things**

 ****

**Quote of the day:**

“Failure is simply the opportunity to begin again, this time more intelligently.” — Henry Ford

**Reflection:**

Can you imagine carrying water bottles made of clay or using disposable utensils made of eggs and animal blood? The legend of the discovery of plastic says that were it not for two accidents, those might be the materials we'd be stuck with today.

*The first tale starts in the lab of Charles Goodyear, who combined rubber and sulfur and accidentally put it on the stove for a period of time. When he came back, he found a tough and durable material*—*created through a process eventually called vulcanization.*

*The second was a spill in John Wesley Hyatt's shop. Inspired by a $10,000 contest to find a replacement for elephant ivory in billiard balls, Hyatt accidentally spilled a bottle of collodion, only to discover that when it dried it formed a flexible-yet-strong material. He didn't win the contest (nor did anyone, for that matter), but by 1872 his brother Isaiah coined the term* celluloid *to describe what was becoming the first commercially successful plastic*—*even used in the first motion-picture film by George Eastman.*

Our mistakes can sometimes be the door to new and better things. Do you have any mistake that is a door to better things?

\*\*

1. **Change Assures Progress**

 ****

**Quote of the day:**

“Change does not necessarily assure progress, but progress implacably requires change.” —Henry S. Commager

**Reflection:**

We can learn a lot about coping with change from the classic musical *Fiddler on the Roof*.

*The story takes place at the beginning of the 20th century and features a Jewish family suffering from poverty and religious persecution in the south of Russia. The father, Tevye, complains about having five daughters and no sons, not the ideal distribution on a farm. To make matters worse, his three older daughters picked husbands he didn’t approve of, one of them an Orthodox goy. Throughout the story, whenever there is trouble or change in the air, a man playing a fiddle on a roof appears to him in a vision.*

*In the end, the family—and the entire Jewish community— is forced to leave their small town, during winter, with each family going to be with relatives in distant parts of the world. Tevye is forced to sell his old horse because of a bad hoof and has to push the wagon, containing his meager belongings, down the road himself, followed by his wife and two younger daughters. Then the fiddler appears again, playing his instruments cheerfully. At first, Tevye rejects the vision and almost curses it, but after a few moments, he lights up and begins to walk with renewed gusto to the rhythm of the fiddler’s song.*

The lessons of this movie transcend time and space. Changes are easier when we submit to them instead of resisting. Our lives are full of obstacles and sometimes persecutions. We face challenges and change in relationships, career, home life, with our health, looks, physical appearance, stamina, and so on.

How do you handle change—with resistance and complaint, or with gusto, walking to the rhythm of the fiddler?

\*\*

1. **Looking Through a Keyhole**

****

**Quote of the day:**

“No matter what your past has been, you have a spotless future.”—Author Unknown

**Reflection:**

I read this article by Janet Kluck, adapted from a podcast on Just1Thing, that I wanted to share with you. It’s interesting, and a good way to look at plans that didn’t turn out the way we’d hoped—dreams that break and shatter as we wonder what went wrong.

*Imagine there is a gorgeous painting hanging on the wall of an apartment. It was painted by a great artist and contains contrasts of images, colors, shapes, and elements if you could see it in its entirety. But you’re not inside the apartment, and the only chance you have of seeing it at all is through the keyhole, where you can catch only a small glimpse of the darkest, most shadowed section. You might think, “What a dark and depressing painting! Why didn’t the artist use brighter colors or grace the canvas with more light?”*

*This is so often our perspective of our own lives. We focus on the dark spots, the losses and perceived failures. But all the while, our life is a beautiful, colorful, joyful, and bright painting; the problem is that we are viewing it through a tiny keyhole. If we could just see our lives from a bigger, more complete perspective, so many other elements and colors and highlights would come into view, and that tiny image would be transformed into a marvelous masterpiece.*

Are you looking at your life through the key hole or from a bigger more complete perspective?

\*\*

1. **Problem Solver or Victim**

 

**Quote of the day:**

“People who consider themselves victims of their circumstances will always remain victims unless they develop a greater vision for their lives.” —Stedman Graham

**Reflection:**

Some say life is a struggle. If it is, every problem we face leads us to one of two choices. Either we choose to be victorious, or we choose to be a victim. Either we choose to be responsible for the life we create, or we shirk our responsibility by blaming others for our failures and unhappiness. Those who choose to be victorious don’t find life to be a struggle. They don’t encounter problems; they merely face things they wish to change. When they find something blocking their way, they look for a way to get around it, or to overcome it. On the other hand, those who choose to be victims are experts at looking for excuses and find others to blame for their self-inflicted misery.

Here are two real-life examples:

*Carl wishes to recover from a long string of failures. To this end, he enrolled in a college course to update his skills. One day, when the instructor was writing on the blackboard, he shouted from the back of the room, “Write larger! I can’t read what you’re writing.” Carl was miffed when the instructor ignored his pleas. A few weeks later, he complained to his classmates, “I’m afraid I’ll have to drop out of this course. I have bad eyes and our teacher writes too small. How can I take notes and learn the material? Our instructor doesn’t seem to care about my disability.” “Why don’t you come to class early so you can get a seat in the front of the room?” suggested a classmate. “Because the bus in my area runs only once an hour if I took the earlier bus, I would arrive much too early.” replied Carl. “Get a pair of glasses.” another classmate advised. “I have a pair,” said Carl, “but they are not very helpful.” Carl had an answer for every question. Although he could never find solutions for whatever was troubling him, he was proficient in finding excuses for his inaction. He was convinced he had certain “disabilities” that warranted special treatment. The world should conform to his “special needs,” he reasoned.*

*Kyle Maynard is entirely different. Born with stumps in the place of arms and legs, he believed it was his responsibility to adapt to the world rather than demanding the world change for him. Despite the enormous obstacles it didn’t prevent him from learning how to write and type. Neither did it prevent him from becoming a defensive lineman on a football team, a university student, and a top wrestler. He is also an accomplishments author, world traveler, and motivational speaker. Kyle realizes that making excuses holds us back, while assuming responsibility moves us forward.*

Which are you a problem solver or a victim?

1. **Laughter**

 ****

**Quote of the day:**

“I live by this credo: Have a little laugh at life and look around you for happiness instead of sadness. Laughter has always brought me out of unhappy situations. Even in your darkest moment, you usually can find something to laugh about if you try hard enough.” —Red Skelton

**Reflection:**

I love the following story. The choices this young man made influenced a lot of people for good.

*Jerome K. Jerome was a British writer whose father died when he was 12. At age 14, he had to go to work to support his mother and sister. His life got even harder when his mother died, but after many different jobs, the end result was that he became a writer—not of sad stories, but a famous humorist, writing funny stories to encourage others. After such a difficult beginning in life, he said, “It is from the struggle, not the victory, that we gain strength.”*

Maybe he was influenced by Mark Twain when he said, “The best way to cheer yourself up is to try to cheer somebody else up.” There is enough good and bad in everyone’s life—ample sorrow and happiness, sufficient joy and pain—to find a rational basis for becoming either an optimist or pessimist. We can choose to laugh or cry, bless or curse. It’s our decision. Which perspective do we want to view life?

\*\*

1. **Things Looking Mismatched?**

 

**Quote of the day:**

"Life is not a matter of holding good cards, but of playing a poor hand well.” — Robert Louis Stevenson

**Reflection:**

I received this story from a friend and wanted to share it as it conveys such a good lesson!

*Two years ago, my husband and I moved to a new city, into a small apartment. It was a good situation to start out while we found our bearings. My husband chose the paint for our bedroom/living room. Soon it was covered with a nice salmon color. At that point all we had was a bed and a green bedspread. We looked online for secondhand furniture within our price range, and found a small couch set that was a mixture of orange, beige, and salmon. So now we had furniture that matched the walls, but not our green bedspread.*

*A year and a half passed, when we found a little house to rent and moved into our own place. We put our couch set and dining table in the brown and beige living/dining room. We put our salmon colored tablecloth on the dining room table and our sparsely furnished living and dining room blended together. Next we bought some inexpensive bookshelves. The darker pressed wood looked out of place in our living room, but it was the best we could afford.*

*Our dear friend had a decorative table that she no longer wanted, and thought would be a perfect fit with our living room furniture. We set it in the middle of the room. Though it was natural wood like our couch set, it was stained a darker color. One more piece amongst our already mismatched furniture. Since I was unable to see how we could make all these odd pieces of furniture blend together, I walked out of the room and left it up to my husband to figure out, as after all, he’s the artist and the one most likely to make sense of it all. He pulled everything out and started putting it all back in, one piece at a time. Thirty minutes later I returned to our living/dining room and was amazed at how beautifully everything fit together. It appeared as if we had purposely bought each piece with the final symmetry in mind. Not classy, but a perfect blend.*

*The darker stain of the new table helped to blend together the lighter stain of our couch set with the darker colored bookshelves. The dark wood of the front door suddenly looked like we had planned it into the scheme of things. In our storage we found some placemats that were just the right color to blend the living room with the dining room furniture.*

*At the moment, we’re unable to see very far into the future. We have an idea, but the specifics of where we are going with our lives aren’t clear. It’s no longer the dense fog of a couple of years ago. But still, when I look into the future, what I see are patches of clarity mixed amongst patches of fog. There are a few long-term plans, but we haven’t yet been able to put together a thorough overall plan. The living and dining room are now my place of reference.*

*We didn’t plan for our furniture to blend so well together. There were even a few months when the pieces looked very out of place, and step by step it seemed to get worse. But what was needed was that one last piece, and all of a sudden it all came together beautifully. Right now things look a bit disjointed for our future, but we’re building towards something both useful and beautiful.*

The moral of the story: Even if things in your life look mismatched, give it some time. You may find things will work out for the best.

\*\*