

Choose Life - or: Attitude is Everything



Jerry seemed unreal – he was never down or in a bad mood and always had something positive to say. When someone asked him how he was doing, he would reply, “I feel on top of the world!”

His attitude made him a unique manager and a natural motivator. If an employee was having a bad day, Jerry was there encouraging them how to look on the positive side of the situation. Therefore several waiters followed him from restaurant to restaurant.

Observing Jerry’s manner really made me curious. One day I asked him, “I don’t get it! You can’t be a positive person all the time. How do you do it?”

Jerry replied, “Each morning I wake up and say to myself, ‘Jerry, you have two choices today. You can choose to be in a good mood or you can choose to be in a bad mood.’ I choose to be in a good mood. Each time something bad happens, I can choose to be a victim or I can choose to learn from it. I choose to learn from it. Every time someone comes to me complaining, I can choose to accept their complaining or I can point out the positive side of life. I choose the positive side of life.”

“Yeah, right, it’s not that easy,” I protested.

“Yes, it is,” Jerry said. “Life is all about choices. Every situation is a choice. You choose how you react to situations. You choose how people will affect your mood. You choose to be in a good mood or bad mood. The bottom line: It’s your choice how you live life.” I reflected on what Jerry said and, after leaving the restaurant industry, often thought about him when I made a choice about life instead of reacting to it.

Several years later, I heard that Jerry had been held up at gunpoint by three armed robbers. While trying to open the restaurant safe, his hand, shaking from nervousness, slipped off the combination. The robbers

panicked and shot him. Luckily, Jerry was found quickly and rushed to hospital. There he had 18 hours of surgery, followed by weeks of intensive care.

I saw Jerry about six months after the incident. When I asked him how he was, he replied, "I feel on top of the world! Want to see my scars?" I declined to see his wounds, but asked him what went through his mind as the robbery took place. Jerry replied, "As I lay on the floor, I remembered that I had two choices: I could choose to live, or I could choose to die. I chose to live."

"Weren't you scared?" I asked.

Jerry continued, "When they wheeled me into the emergency room and I saw the expressions on the faces of the doctors and nurses, I got really scared. In their eyes I read, 'He's a dead man.' I knew I needed to take action."

"What did you do?" I asked.

"Well, there was a big, burly nurse shouting questions at me," said Jerry. "She asked if I was allergic to anything. 'Yes,' I replied. The doctors and nurses stopped working as they waited for my reply. I took a deep breath and yelled, 'Bullets!' Over their laughter, I told them, 'I am choosing to live. Operate on me as if I am alive, not dead.'"

Jerry lived thanks to the skill of his doctors, but also because of his amazing attitude. I learned from him that every day we have the choice to live fully. Attitude, after all, is everything.

Adapted from: Francie Baltazar-Schwartz, *Attitude is Everything* (originally from <http://www.spiritual-endeavors.org/stories/attitude.htm>)