

Chapter 1

Choose to Be Positive

Whether you think you can or think you can't, you're right. —Henry Ford

One morning I woke up at 4 a.m., heart pounding, skin sweating, and mind racing. In the span of a few years, I managed to lose just about everything—my company, my career, my home, my pride, and my self-confidence. I found myself right back where I had started my adult life—in my college town of Baton Rouge, renting a room from a friend, and scratching out a living in an entry-level sales job.

It happened quickly. I hadn't had time to process everything; but the anxiety, shame, and sense of failure were slowly getting to me. I rarely slept, and when I did, I tossed and turned, and woke up in a near panic. I was broke, financially and mentally. I felt as if I had fallen down a long, dark hole and everything was caving in on me. There were moments when I literally found it hard to breathe.

I kept asking myself where I had gone wrong. Had I been stupid and reckless? Did I choose the wrong job? What could I have done differently? I kept replaying my entire life in my head—all the choices I made or didn't make, the forks in the road I didn't take, and all the ways I could have prevented this disaster.

Have you ever had words pop into your head and you can't remember where you heard them? Maybe it was a bit of a song or a magazine you read some time ago? Several months before, I had been brainstorming and randomly wrote down four words. That morning around 4 a.m., those four words suddenly came back to me.

Get off your attitude.

I wasn't sure why I had remembered them at four in the morning, but I couldn't get them out of my head. I would go back to thinking about my bad luck and bad choices, but I couldn't shake that phrase. It just rolled around and around in my head—*get off your attitude.*

It kept repeating until I decided to say it out loud. I said, “*Hey, Ryan—get off your attitude!*”

Hearing those words out loud did something to me. I've always been a go-getter, but in the past few months I felt totally helpless as I watched my life slip through my hands. I felt that somehow everything was unfair and I didn't deserve all that had happened to me. But hearing those words made me realize I had been sitting around with a victim's mentality, waiting for life to get better. I realized I couldn't change what had happened. All I could change was my attitude about it.

I could choose how I would let the situation affect me and decide what I was going to do about it. Was I going to sit around whining for the rest of my life, or was I going to get off my attitude and do something about it!?

That night, I decided “get off your attitude” was my new mantra. I was not going to let my past determine my future. At that moment, I realized it was up to me to take responsibility for my life and shape my future—starting with my attitude.

The Importance of Attitude

Why is attitude so important? *Because it determines every- thing else in your life!*

Attitude isn't just about whether or not you're having a good or bad day. Attitude is more than that. It affects relationships. It affects careers. It affects your entire future.

I've met people who went through something similar to what I did. They were flying high, had a great business, and then lost it all. Years later, they're still talking about their problems and misfortunes. For some of them, their spouse left them and they were forced to sell the family business. With others, their business partner was

cheating them. Some had their major customer go out of business.

These people are talented, experienced, and smart. If they would start another business, the odds of success this time could be quite good. Unfortunately, they're still reliving the events that led up to their failure. Their negative attitude won't let them get on with their life.

I know how they feel. I know what failure feels like. I lost my business. It hurts. What's the difference between those negative thinking people and me? It's our attitudes. I'm not any better than they are or any smarter than they are. I am different from them in one way: I chose to see my past and my future differently.

I GOT OFF MY ATTITUDE!

In *The Winning Attitude*, John Maxwell summed up the idea of attitude. Let me share it with you:

Attitude...It is the "advance man" of our true selves. Its roots are inward but its fruit is outward. It is our best friend or our worst enemy. It is more honest and more consistent than our words. It is an outward look based on past experiences. It is a thing which draws people to us or repels them. It is never content until it is expressed. It is the librarian of our past. It is the speaker of our present. It is the prophet of our future.

Can you see how important your attitude is? Changing your attitude can literally change your life. It did mine. And here's the great thing about attitude: *It's your choice.*

Want a Great Life?

Your attitude is a habit. Most people I meet have a bad habit of believing they can't do anything; of talking down to themselves, and of living a life of quiet defeat. They think, talk, and act as if it's impossible for them to succeed.

If this is you—stop it!

When I'm guilty of that, I remind myself of this truth:

Watch your thoughts, for they become words. Watch your words, for they become actions. Watch your actions, for they become habits. Watch your habits, for they become character. Watch your character, for it becomes your destiny.

—Unknown

Do you see it!? If you want to live a fulfilling life—one filled with an abundance of health, wealth, and happiness— it starts with how you think, talk, and act!

Living the life of your dreams starts with getting into a habit of being positive in how you think, talk, and act. That's it! The flip side of the coin is if you have a habit of thinking, talking, and acting negatively, you are living a life far below what you can achieve.

Two of my favorite books are *The Power of Positive Thinking* by Norman Vincent Peale and *Success through a Positive Mental Attitude* by Napoleon Hill and W. Clement Stone. These books underscore the basic idea that success and fulfillment in life begins with your thoughts.

GOYA-ism: If you control your thoughts, and control your choices, you'll create a brighter future.

You Have a Choice

I hear some people say, “I can’t help it. Somebody tells me something and I just react,” or, “I can’t help how I feel.”

Children *react* to life; adults *respond* to it. Sure, when something happens, you instantly feel an emotion, whether it’s grief, or anger, or anxiety. But immature people fail to realize they don’t have to act immediately on that emotion. They can choose how to respond. When I’m tempted to just lash out at something, I remember something I once heard:

Life is 10% what happens to you and 90% how you respond to it. —Charles Swindoll

Some people believe they don’t have a choice and that their fate is out of their hands—that God, life, the universe, or whoever, decides what will happen to them.

They have this passive approach to life that whatever happens, happens.

Yes, those things play into the big picture, but you have a choice of what you do about it. God gave me the phrase “get off your attitude.” I could have dropped it or ignored it. I could have stayed negative with a victim’s mentality. But I decided to do something.

You can do the same thing! You have the power to change your life. Believe this:

If there is anything you want to change in your world, change your attitude toward it.

That’s my version of The Law of Attitude!

Life isn’t about what happens to you—it’s what you do about it. Honestly, you can’t change much of what happens in life, but you can change how you look at it. That, in turn, changes everything.

In promoting Brian Tracy and other speaking and training organizations, I've had the privilege of living all over the United States and meeting some of the best and most successful people in the country. They all had different careers. They all came from different backgrounds. They all achieved different measures of wealth and success. But do you know the one thing they all had in common?

A positive attitude!

These people wake up in the morning *expecting* to succeed that day. If you could go back in time, you would find they all had a positive attitude *before* they started experiencing success.

What is success? This is how I define it:

Success is being able to do what you love and get paid for it.

The inspiring people I have met loved what they were doing—and they got paid very well for doing it. These people weren't lucky. They simply approached life from a different angle and with a different set of expectations.

I hear people say, "Why doesn't anything good ever happen to me? Why do some people have all the luck?" Here's what being lucky means to me: being able to see life optimistically and realize opportunities are all around you. If you're going around with a negative attitude, you'll be blind to those opportunities. Positive people and "lucky opportunities" will pass you by because of your pessimism. As long as you keep that outlook, so-called luck will never find you.

Want to change your luck? Change your attitude!

Take the Negative Out, Plug the Positive In

Being positive is a habit. It takes time to realize all the negative thoughts, words, and actions you use in daily life. You must learn to recognize when you're being negative.

When you see it, you need to rid yourself of negativity and focus on something positive instead. I learned this life lesson in my Maw-maw's garden.

When I was about seven years old, I was helping my grandmother weed her tomato

garden. Like any kid, I was tired of doing the same thing over and over again. Finally, I asked why we had to pull weeds all the time. She said if we didn't, the weeds would grow and eventually choke our tomatoes.

I said, “But Maw-maw, we weed all the time!”

She said, “Ryan, that's how it is—weeds are always going to grow, but if we keep pulling them, they won't damage and over run our tomatoes, instead the tomatoes will grow to be fresh and ripe.”

I don't know if my grandmother realized she was teaching me about life, but I believe she did. We have to constantly “weed” out negative thoughts, words, and actions or they'll continue to grow. Sometimes they're our own thoughts and sometimes we get them from somewhere else. But keeping our mind free and clear of negativity allows positive thoughts and ideas to grow.

One of the most influential books in my life was *Think and Grow Rich* by Napoleon Hill. He wrote about the Law of Attraction:

Our minds become magnetized with the dominating thoughts we hold...and these magnets attract to us the

forces, the people, the circumstances of life which harmonize with the nature of our dominating thoughts. — Napoleon Hill

We live in a society where we're bombarded with negativity all day long. We read about it in the newspapers and in our email; we listen to it on the radio; we watch it on television; and we hear it in many people around us. No one wakes up to a negativity-free world.

But those great people you meet in your life—the people who inspire you and make you want to be a better person like my grandmother, your Little League coach, or your favorite teacher—are those who constantly weed out bad influences and leave the good ones to grow. They control their life's harvest by planting good ideas, words, and actions. They plant positive seeds of abundance and harvest the benefits of it.

Remember, you are in control of your life and your future. It's your choice in how you face life's situations. Make the choice that a positive response is the only way to handle them. If you'll inject faith, hope, and love into your everyday living, you will see life open up. It will become something more meaningful and grand.

Start with your thoughts. Brian Tracy says:

You become what you think about most of the time.

Your reality—the life you'll live—begins in your mind. Here's an interesting fact—your mind can only hold one

thought at a time. If it can only hold one, you might as well choose a positive one.

I tell people it's just like listening to a radio with only two stations—one's negative and one's positive. If you don't like what you're hearing on WNEG, switch to the positive station—WPOS. You can change your life just as easily as you changed the station!

WNEG

No, that's impossible.

This is a huge problem.

I wish I could have that.

I can't afford it.

I don't have what it takes.

WPOS

I know it's possible.

It's a huge opportunity.

How can I achieve that?

How can I afford it?

I do have what it takes.

Stop dwelling on the bad and start focusing on the good. I mean, it's not rocket science. How hard is it to see that if you're always pessimistic, you'll be a miserable person who never achieves their dreams? Or, if you always see the good in every situation, you'll achieve great things in life?

I read about a study which concluded the average person thinks about 60,000 thoughts a day. A separate study concluded eight out of every ten thoughts of the average person are generally negative. Eighty percent! Combined, these two studies say you have about 48,000 negative thoughts a day. No wonder so many people have a bad attitude!

With all that fear, doubt, and anger flowing through your mind daily, it's easy to see why you have a hard time believing this positive attitude stuff. It's a miracle you can believe anything good. These studies highlight what I call NAB—"negative attitude blockage." If you have a heart blockage, it deprives your body of life-giving blood. If you don't take action immediately, it could be life-threatening.

NAB works the same way. Negativity blocks life-giving hope and belief to your mind and spirit. If you don't take action, it could be fatal, and it could deprive you of the best things in life.

In my seminars, I break this concept into an easy-to-remember formula:

Positive Thoughts + Positive Feelings = Positive Actions

You will achieve the life you've imagined, beginning with your thoughts.

If you could go back in time and visit a successful person when they were unknown, I would bet they wouldn't be talking about how bad their life was, how much they hated their job, or how nobody would listen to their ideas. You would hear them talking about their dreams, the good fortune they would soon enjoy, and how great things were going to be. Early in their lives, they adopted the habit of being positive.

During one part of my career, I trained others how to set and achieve their goals. I was paid to talk about being positive. Yet during that time, I was making bad choices in my personal life. In retrospect, I see I had issues with self-confidence and self-image. I threw my own pity parties and played the victim. I encouraged other people to be positive about their lives, and yet I see now, I wasn't positive about mine.

Sometimes a person's true self is hard to see. I acted as if I had a positive attitude, but I wasn't truly positive. I had a negative attitude about myself and my life. That is why having the right attitude isn't something superficial. It needs to become the very core of who and what you are.

When you start thinking positive, you start talking positive, and then acting positive. Words are perhaps the most powerful tools you possess. The idea of how powerful they are goes as far back as biblical times. The book of Proverbs says:

Death and life are in the power of the tongue.

When I grasped this idea, I began to affirm my belief in myself and my dreams every day. When I hear those howling winds of doubt, I turn up the volume on WPOS. I realize how powerful words are. I use them to my advantage and to enrich the lives of those around me. Do you?

Live a Great Life Everyday

My own acronym of “attitude” is:

Always

Take

The

Initiative

To

Uncover

Daily

Enthusiasm

It means you’re looking for the good in every situation and in every person, every day, all the time. Having a positive attitude is not simply a hope or wishful thinking. I know firsthand life isn’t always great. But the fact remains, you can look at it in an optimistic way.

I once attended a seminar where the presenter asked, “When you wake up in the morning, do you say, ‘Good morning, God!’ or ‘Good God, it’s morning.’” What’s your attitude? How do you start your day?

What do you do on a daily basis? Are you acting on your positive thoughts and words? If you believe you can find a better job, are you optimistically searching—and expecting to find something better? If you say your relationship with your significant other is going to be better, are you actively engaging in better behavior?

People ask me what are some of my daily habits. I tell them I eat three square meals a day. For breakfast, I read a success story on the internet. For lunch, I listen to a motivational speaker. For dinner, I watch an inspiring biography. By constantly feeding myself great mental and emotional food, I find it’s pretty easy to stay in great shape!

I'm not someone who's lived a perfect life. I've made some bad—sometimes really bad—decisions. By choosing to have a positive outlook, I've turned my life into some- thing very positive.

My choice to be positive helped me get my life back on track. If you will infuse your life with positive energy, incredible things will happen. It's not some sort of magical formula. It's just the way life works.

Take this idea to heart—everything in life begins with your attitude, and that is the one thing you completely control. This key idea—how you choose to respond to circumstances—determines how those circumstances affect your entire life. Get into the habit of thinking, talking, and acting positive about everything.

Choose to be positive. Choose your destiny.

GOYA-cise:

Start noticing how you think, talk, and act. When you think or say something negative, find a way to switch it to something positive. Decide to find the good in every person and situation. Spend a little time listening to, watching, or reading inspiring stories and people. Throughout the day, use positive affirmation, such as: “I am responsible for my life. I will choose to respond with a positive attitude.”

Now that you know the secret to achieving a better life, I want to encourage you to go after your dreams. But before you can reach for them, you have to surround your- self with positive people who are going to help you soar.