

The Attitudes That Lead to Higher Life Satisfaction

Socrates said, "To know thyself is the beginning of wisdom." Mainly through studies done in two modern branches of psychology - Cognitive Behavioral Therapy and Rational Emotive Therapy - many attitudes (self knowledge) have been found which promote higher levels of psychological well being - and thus higher satisfaction with one's life. Here are some (listed in random - not priority - order):

- 1. Take responsibility for the consequences of your actions, decisions and behaviors.** When things turn out "right", accept the credit graciously. When things turn out "wrong", "take it on the chin".
- 2. Know what's best for yourself and be able to appreciate/accept/tolerate different "bests" in others - as long as their "bests" don't harm other people or their property.**
- 3. Be able to reliably estimate probabilities & consequences.**
- 4. Realize that everything we know is a combination of "Reality" (what actually exists or is true) and "Perception" (how we interpret what exists).** Reality can be thought of as "positive" (the sun rises in the east) or "negative" (pigs don't fly). Perception is "accurate" (the sky is blue) or "inaccurate" (I can't lose weight). Thus what we know (or think we know) fits neatly into four categories:
 - Positive Reality, Accurate Perception, "I know what I know":** $1 + 1 = 2$
 - Negative Reality, Accurate Perception, "I know what I don't know":** I can't fly a 747.
 - Positive Reality, Inaccurate Perception "I don't know what I know":** I can't remember names. (YES YOU CAN, with proper training.) This category is often called "Untapped Potential"
 - Negative Reality, Inaccurate Perception "I don't know what I don't know":** You think your flight leaves at 5PM but unbeknownst to you, the departure time has been changed - it now leaves at 3:30PM. This category is often called "Trouble".
- 5. Realize that you are the best judge of what's right for you - UNLESS you are "brain-compromised":** chemically, physically, genetically, emotionally or KNOWLEDGABLY: category #4 above, "Trouble" - "I don't know what I don't know".
- 6. Realize that another person is the best judge of what's right for him/her.** [As a corollary to this characteristic, an effective person never gives advice. Instead, s/he says: "If I were in this situation, here's what I would do; you'll have to decide what's best for you to do." (The same caveat about being "brain-compromised" in 5 above applies here also. If you ascertain that the other person IS actually brain-compromised, then you don't just "give advice"; you actually TELL the other person what to do. This is called "Directive Counseling".)]..... OR Say "here are some options; what works best for you?"
- 7. Be able to say "No";** ie, only accept responsibilities for which you have the time, talent/ability and resources to carry out.
- 8. Set realistic goals; know the difference between a dream and a goal:** a GOAL has 1) specific steps to achieve it, 2) within a time frame and 3) can be quantified. A dream has none of these 3.
- 9. Understand the difference between "need" and "enjoy"/"it's important for me".** "Need" really means "curl up and die without"; we need air, water, food. But not: "I need to go to the grocery store." Rather, "It's important for me to go to the grocery store." Or "I'd enjoy going to the grocery store." More importantly, one doesn't NEED to be loved, but one surely ENJOYS being loved!!!!!!
- 10. Realize the most important words in the English language are "Deal with it".** [The milk is spilled; don't get angry, don't blame someone, don't complain - just clean it up (deal with the spilled milk).]

11. Realize that EVENTS do not determine how we feel, but how we THINK about those events determines how we feel - and thus our subsequent behavior.

12. Realize that the MAJOR events in one's life (termed "Life Events") come in 4 categories: events that happen by chance and events that we MAKE happen - then each of these 2 categories can be either positive or negative. Examples:

- chance, positive = finding a \$1000 bill
- chance, negative = being hit by lightning
- make happen, positive = studying hard, then making an A on a quiz
- make happen, negative = using crack cocaine, then becoming addicted

13. Understand that positive self worth comes from "being", not from "doing". "I have self worth because I AM intelligent, motivated, fun, honest, socially adroit, good-looking, etc." (Being) - NOT "I have self worth because I make "A"s on quizzes, can run fast, can bench press 350, can give a good speech, can tell funny jokes, etc." (Doing). One's Being makes possible the Doing, not visa versa.

14. Understand "the 3 Cs" of strong relationships:

1. Commitment
2. Communication
3. Compromise

15. Know the characteristics of satisfactory work:

- Challenges without defeating
- Provides clear goals
- Provides unambiguous feedback
- Provides a sense of control
- Has co-workers who are enjoyable to work with - especially one's immediate supervisor
- Has remuneration commensurate with a) the demands, difficulty & responsibilities of the job and b) one's skills, talents, qualifications, knowledge, experience & abilities.

16. Realize that the WORDS we use (in thinking and speaking) are a big determinant of our emotional & psychological health (RET = Rational Emotive Therapy). Focus on using positive words - and NO profanity.

17. Understand that the motivation for behaviors is determined by Egoism vs Altruism (Social Orientation) and Duty vs Passion (Driving Force).

18. Realize that "knowing" fits in 4 categories based on Perception (accurate & inaccurate) and Reality (Positive Being & Negative Being).

- I know what I know. (Positive Certainty: $1 + 1 = 2$)
- I know what I don't know. (Negative Certainty: I can't fly a 747.)
- I don't know what I know. (Untapped potential: I can't remember names.)
- I don't know what I don't know. (Trouble: I can get drunk and safely drive a car.)

19. Have developed a definite code of Ethics & Morality based on some combination of "The 4 Ethical Bases" that determines what behaviors are right & wrong for you:

- Religion
- Law
- Family & Friends' Values
- Secular Humanism (wrong behaviors harm me or other people or their property)

20. NEVER choose to be offended - by ANYONE or ANYTHING.

21. Know “The life Complexity Equation”: The complexity of life is directly proportional to the extent to which we become involved with the lives of other people. [Simplest life = the hermit (involved with 0 people); Complex life = doctor/minister (involved with 100s of people)]

22. Realize the human brain doesn’t reach its maximum ability to make good judgments until (on average) the age of 24.