

DEMONSTRATING A POSITIVE ATTITUDE TOWARDS CUSTOMERS/PATIENTS

Learning outcomes:

At the conclusion of this session the participants should be able to:

1. Comprehend the business and personal benefits of a positive attitude
2. Be able to list components of demonstrating a positive attitude
3. Have discussed positive words and phrases to use in day to day language
4. Investigate how we demonstrate a positive attitude to others
5. Review examples of the benefits of possessing a positive attitude
6. Conduct a self-analysis to determine your level of optimism

Are You An Optimist Or Pessimist?

We all know someone who is a clear-cut optimist or pessimist. Whether your co-worker bounces into the office and cheerily announces her next great life plan or your neighbor grumpily informs you of the latest depressing story from the evening news, some people's world view is easy to see. Take this quiz to find out if you are openly optimistic or a pessimistic pouter.

1. **The world is a less dangerous place now than when you were a child:**
True False
2. **Today's kids are learning important lessons that will turn them into strong, capable adults:**
True False
3. **It does not matter how hard you try, some things are simply impossible:**
True False
4. **Life is meant to be enjoyed:**
True False
5. **People are basically good at heart:**
True False
6. **The cures for AIDS and cancer will not be found in your lifetime:**
True False
7. **When you are dumped, you are devastated and feel as though you will never find love again:**
True False
8. **Five years from now, life will be better than it is today:**
True False
9. **When things go badly, you feel that it is only a temporary setback:**
True False
10. **If someone you care about is in a bad mood, you feel like it is your fault:**
True False

Openly Optimistic : You sail easily through life, propelled by a belief that things will work themselves out. Whether you believe in destiny or simply the goodness of man, you don't sweat the small stuff. Your positive attitude creates a climate of success, where good things happen frequently. When things do go wrong, you learn from your mistakes and move on. Optimism is a wonderful trait, so keep doing what you do best! Just be careful that your optimistic attitude does not lead to complacency. Being overly optimistic may keep you from trying your best to succeed, or even guide you into staying in a situation that is bad for you. As long as you have balance and a healthy sense of intuition, your optimism can take you far in life.

Somewhere In Between : You can be optimistic, but you may let pessimism get in the way of achieving your goals at times. You want to see the good in people and situations, but there is a part of you that is distrustful and afraid that things will not turn out the way you hoped. Practice making a conscious effort to be more optimistic and good things will happen. Realize the power of positive thinking and try to see the bright side of every situation.

Pessimistic Pouter : Life seems like a real chore sometimes. You tend to dwell on the negative, believing that things will always be tough. You may put off trying new things or even quit things you enjoy because you feel that you will never be good enough at them. Being pessimistic can hold you back or lead to depression by convincing you that you are doomed for failure. Everyone feels down sometimes, but hope is what keeps us moving forward. To help drag yourself out of a pessimistic mindset, try to think back on bad situations that worked out for the best. Or forget the thinking, put on a great outfit and hit the town. It is hard to feel pessimistic when you are having a great time!

How we respond to positive attitude: What is the number one quality that can help a service professional succeed? Is it friendliness? How about the ability to work effectively with others? What about being a team player? Then there is always having good communication skills. The most important quality an individual must have to succeed in business or in life, by far, is a positive attitude.

How and why does one person quickly bounce back after a risk has failed while another spends years regretting their decision and repeatedly verbalizing "if only I had..."? What element always seems to help one person achieve their goals, while another individual cannot get past their last attempt ten years ago to create a dream? Why does one sales clerk willingly help an irate customer while another takes the verbal accusations personally?

People who bounce back from failure and can see beyond the customer's frustration to complete their goals have a magical ability. It is called a positive attitude! The individual with a positive attitude always seems to magically pull the rabbit out of the tall top hat just when you think they can't. Part of the reason they can is because they believe they can. Their attitude is one of can do! Our thought process and how we choose to think is reflected in our attitude.

Throughout life, we record each and every experience in our subconscious mind. For the most part, we are unaware we have stored these experiences away in the filing cabinet of our mind. At some future point, a new event will trigger the memory of an old experience. For example, a beautiful sunset may remind you of a vacation trip to Hawaii. It is important to note that our brain is capable of both recording and playing back memories. Second, when we do recall a memory, it is the

emotions and feelings we re-experience, not the facts and figures from the memory. Finally, the reason we re-experience those feelings and emotions may be based on either positive or negative memories.

When we interact with customers, sometime a shirt they are wearing, a perfume they have on, or the way they walk can trigger a subconscious memory from our past. The way we have become accustomed to remembering given events can have a major effect on our reaction to others regardless of the reality of the situation. For example, the shirt a customer is wearing reminds you of Uncle Harry. You have only fond memories of him and emotionally you will probably respond favorably to the customer. Your manager walks exactly like your seventh grade PE teacher. You always felt she was particularly mean to you. Without even realizing it, your response to your manager may always be negative. You will probably not even know why you are responding the way you are. The feelings just surface and your reaction is automatic.

Positive attitude can be defined as a helpful state of mind or a feeling regarding a situation or fact. It is how we perceive events, experiences and things in our lives. An individual with a positive attitude sees and finds opportunities while others do not. They choose to view the irate customer as an opportunity for service not as a problem. There are countless examples in sports of teams that were perceived as the underdogs and then they forged ahead and beat the favored team. I sat in the stands at the first game of the 1988 World Series. The Oakland A's were favored to win the series. In the bottom of the ninth inning, with two outs and a full count, Kirk Gibson hit a home run to win the game. The stands went wild. We stood on our seats and cheered for a solid 10 minutes. The A's were deflated and at that very moment lost the series. Why? Because their attitudes sank in disbelief that the underdogs could beat them. They never recovered.

Customer service is not easy. Everyone has at some time been challenged by a difficult customer. The skilled professional is constantly faced with situations that require the utmost skill, tact, diplomacy and positive attitude in order to succeed in even the most adverse conditions. We can choose our response to any situation. We also have a choice regarding our attitude. A positive attitude is deeply rooted in our character. Be encouraged, character aspects can be learned. It takes practice and a willingness to change. The following suggestions are ways that you can strengthen your attitude and create a winning situation for the client and the organization.

Select a customer-focused attitude. Realize that a positive attitude is a matter of choice. We decide the positive aspects of any situation and choose our reaction. Focus on the customer's needs and wants, not their angry tone.

Strive for constant improvement. Always strive to improve your attitude. When negative thoughts arise, ask why. If it is appropriate, resolve the issue immediately rather than burying the ill feelings. Replace the negative thoughts with positive ones. Whenever a negative thought arises, always acknowledge it and refocus on the positive.

Avoid gossip. Gossip usually carries a negative connotation. People choose to spread rumors because it makes them look good, feel better or casts an unfavorable light on the individual. It may make the gossiper feel better, but can also do irreparable damage. Refuse to spread or listen to gossip. You will avoid negative thoughts and messages.

Set an example and walk your talk. When we focus on being a positive provider of service, responsive to the customer regardless of their attitude, we present a positive image for others to

see and emulate. The impression we present of our business is favorable and memorable. People want to be around positive individuals and are more willing to follow the example you will set.

Be accountable. When a problem arises, resolve it. Avoid placing blame on another department or employee for a mistake. When you blame someone else for the problem in front of a customer, it only generates more ill feelings toward you and your organization. The key is the customer wants the issue resolved, so be accountable for your organization and provide alternatives in order to fix the situation.

Listen to your inner voice. If you find your self-talk is negative, resolve the situation. Create and adopt a positive view of the world. That includes thinking positively about yourself, your work and your abilities. If you need to, post inspirational and positive thoughts in easy to see places. This will help you refocus when thoughts do go astray.

Avoid complacency. Recognize areas you need to improve. Establish personal and professional goals and objectives for improvement. Tackle the most difficult areas first. Look for the positive during your personal growth and change processes. Maintain a high personal standards and anticipate that you will achieve your goals.

Listen to your speech. Hear what you say to others. Listen to your tone of voice. Mentally observe your body language. Are your statements upbeat and positive, or negative and condescending? Is your message delivered with enthusiasm and a smile or laced with anger and frustration? People will mirror your message and your body language. If your speech is positive you can expect a favorable response.

Resolve conflicts immediately. When we delay the resolution of conflicts it allows more time for people to let the situation fester and create negative scenarios. Address a conflict when it arises and ill feelings will be doused before they have the opportunity to begin.

Use positive language. State what you can do, not what you can't. Rather than saying "no, we don't accept checks," indicate "we'll gladly accept your cash or credit card." Use positive terms. Instead of calling a situation a problem, name it a challenge. People tend to focus on and remember the negative words more than the positive.

Avoid negativity. Avoid people who are negative in thought and action. Surround yourself with positive people. Negativity breeds more negativity. When you are around others who have a positive attitude it will be easier for you to remain upbeat and focused.

Be proactive. Look for positive solutions to challenging situations. Don't wait to take action. Customers are anxious to resolve issues. When the resolution stage is delayed, it generates more frustration and anger. Your genuine concern and upbeat willingness to take immediate action will be remembered longer than the negative feelings.

People want to work with, buy from and be around positive people. You have the power to create a positive thought process and focus on what is right with your environment rather than what is wrong. Is your glass half empty, or half full? The choice, much like your attitude, is yours