The 10th dimension... the power of ten
Ed Bonner and Adrienne Morris consider the power of attitude

Although one's school and college days may be long past, cast a thought back to a major project that the classmates whom you would have tipped to succeed have actually done so. Conversely, consider those who seemed "vaguely unprepossessing", and observe whether any have achieved beyond expectation.

How is it that some individuals, who seem far less likely to succeed than others, achieve more in their lives than those perceived as more gifted or talented? The answer may be in their respective attitudes to life in general and work in particular. Leadership expert John Maxwell writes in The Difference Maker that one's attitude is like the mind's paintbrush, colouring every aspect of one's life.

If this is the case, what factors colour one's attitude?

1. Who you are - We are all unique individuals, determined to some degree by our genetic wiring, but not limited to it. Our individual personalities are capable of growth and development, and the 'who' we are now is not necessarily the 'who' we were, nor the 'who' we may yet be. What we will become will be determined by the attitude we can bring to the life and work mix. We cannot perform in a way that is inconsistent with how we see ourselves.

2. What you think, what you feel - Our present feelings are influenced by our emotional experiences, past and present. Your attitude is the sum of your thoughts as shaped by your previous experiences. It is difficult to maintain a positive attitude when there are wars going on, bombs going off, volcans exploding, or oil rigs gushing into the sea. Difficult, but not impossible. The times may be depressing, but you don't have to become depressed by them.

3. Where you are, what's going on around you - A strong determinant of attitude is the environment in which the previous experiences were acquired as well as the present environment. Never can an environment have been more daunting than the Dark Ages, yet from it came the Renaissance.

4. Who's around you - It is the nature of man to be influenced by the thinking of one's parents and peers, by what we read in newspapers and magazines. Poverty, divorce, illness, education: it is up to each of us to accept or go beyond these influences.

5. Your dreams and expectations - If your internal thought consensus is that you cannot become rich, then chances are you will not. On the other hand, you can "think and become rich", the philosophy advocated by best-selling author Napoleon Hill. Sooner or later we will get what we expect.

6. Fear of failure - The late South African Prime Minis- ter JC Smuts said: 'A man is not defeated by his opponents, but by himself.' Many of us are self-sabotaging. John Max- well writes: 'There are three types of people in the world – the 'wills', the 'will nots', and the 'cannots'. The first accomplish everything. The second oppose everything. The third fail at everything. Fear attacks us, wastes our energy and makes us captive. The greatest chance of failure is created by the fear of failing.'

7. Your perspective on problems - Maxwell says we may view problems as normal/abnormal; soluble/insoluble; temporary/permanent; controlling vs. controlled. By focusing on the mission ahead, one can generate a number of possible solutions and then choose the most workable.

8. Develop a problem-solving mentality - Embrace each problem as an opportun- ity. Bonner calls for sustained creative thinking, and the pulling together of all available resources (including other people). By focusing on the mission ahead, one can generate a number of possible solutions and then choose the most workable.

9. Worrying about problems that haven't yet happened - Studies show that 95 per cent of fear is baseless. Mark Twain wrote: 'I've been through some terrible things in my life, a few of which actually happened.' Has it ever happened that you have felt the world and its galaxy was about to descend on you, and then, when you have had time to make intel- ligent inquiries, found it not to be of substance? While it is of major importance to take as much care as possible to pre-empt problems, worrying about an un-occurred event will actually expend a great deal of energy leaving less available for when - or if - the problem actually occurs.

10. Overcome discouragement - We have all tried something that has not worked, and it is easy to feel discouraged or to be discouraged by others. Either way, the outcome of being discouraged is to feel that you want to give up the task. It is said that 90 per cent of those who fail are not actually defeated - they have simply quit. So, give up or get up - banish discouragement to where it belongs: alongside negative perceptions and fear of failure.

About the author
Adrienne Morris is a highly trained success coach whose aim is to get people from where they are now to where they want to be, in clear measured steps.

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