

# ATTITUDE

To motivate oneself for achievement requires clear goals and an optimistic, can-do attitude.

You have to be excited and enthusiastic about what you are doing. You must learn to believe in yourself. And you have to be aware of and focused on reaching your goals.

Some people seem to come by a great attitude naturally. They enjoy other people, they assume good things will come out of new experiences, they aren't fearful or shy. If you are one of those people, congratulations! You are on your way already. However, if your natural bent is kind of pessimistic, you can change. And it will be worth the effort!

If you are, indeed, naturally pessimistic, then as you read the last paragraph you may have told yourself that you can't change or that it isn't worth the effort. That negative statement you just made to yourself is the biggest obstacle you have to overcome. Say the following statement with me. (I'm serious, say it with me) "I can be a positive, optimistic, outgoing person." Even better, "I am a positive, optimistic, outgoing person." This is called an affirmation.

If you are struggling in school and you have a lousy attitude, your first order of business has to be to get your head on straight, and I want to help you make a plan in which you really do return to your education and not simply drift into struggling at another enterprise.

*OK, pay attention. Here are four key characteristics that ought to be a part of an inventory of your attitude:*

## Objective

Be honest; with everyone, especially yourself! Admit when you're screwing up. Give yourself credit for doing well. Being honest will help your self-esteem, lower your anxiety levels, and contribute to good personal relationships. Be honest with your professors, too. A relationship with them built on honesty is invaluable. Most importantly, if you are not willing to look at things for what they are, then you cannot make good decisions.

## Deliberate

It takes a conscious effort to change the habits and expectations you have developed over time and are now subconscious to you. You must focus on them. You must create good habits intentionally. Here is an example. Let's

pretend that you miss a lot of early classes because you sleep in. It is typically not enough to simply wish that you would wake up on time for class. Instead, you must sit down and deliberately think of a plan for achieving your goal. Perhaps a new and louder alarm clock is called for. Perhaps you need two alarm clocks. Give a classmate \$10, and if you don't make it to class, he or she gets to keep it. I guarantee you that there is some plan that will help you change your bad habits. But you must act on a plan to deliberately change them. And you have to like it! (And you will because your life is changing for the better.)

## Determined

Where being deliberate means being very intentional about your actions, being determined means being tough-minded about them. There is no point in giving up. Giving up makes you feel like a loser; it makes you feel hopeless. Too many students get to a certain point in a class or studying for a test and say "there is no point in going on." If you don't reach your goals right away, look for another way to achieve them. But never stop moving forward! If you find that you are becoming discouraged or frustrated, then dealing with those feelings becomes part of the challenge. Spend some time deliberately working at getting a better outlook. Better to fall short of your goals as you try your best than never reach them by quitting. Quitting wrecks your self-esteem and prevents you from learning through experiencing life.

## Optimistic

Optimism is so crucial to a good life. No matter what has happened in the past, the future is still yours to influence. Good things are going to happen to you. There is a connection between the effort you make today and the success you find tomorrow. Believe that. One way to get excited about your possibilities is to set goals!

*Here are some hints for developing a great attitude.*

**Step 1: Get focused.** Zero in on what you really want to achieve. Then go through the process of setting goals, and from those goals creating action plans.

**Step 2: Believe in yourself.** To believe in yourself you must know yourself. In order to know yourself, you must experience life. Take some risks. Do some of the things

you have on your action plans, but don't worry yet if you are successful. Just give your best effort. If you are having trouble believing in yourself, then don't judge yourself at all. Take a neutral perspective about yourself. Just observe the reality of yourself as you make your best effort to accomplish your goals. Don't compare yourself to others. Everyone has strengths and weaknesses. As a unique individual, you need only worry about whether or not you are doing right by the gifts that you have been given. Don't be afraid to look honestly at who you are right now. If you are falling short of your goal, evaluate why, make a plan for your next step, commit to getting better, and move forward. Having done so, you know a little more about yourself, and you can also take pride in the fact that you faced your dreams in the context of reality.

**Step 3: A Commitment to Improvement** Now that you have seen yourself in action and have been honest about yourself, you can begin to move forward. Let's say that one of the goals you are actively pursuing is earning an "A" in a math class. You prepared for the first test, but you made a "C." Don't get down. Instead, evaluate the circumstances to see how you could have performed better (Objective). Then, put those ideas for improvement to work in your preparation for the second test (Deliberate and Determined). As long as you believe that your best effort tomorrow will be better than your best effort today (Optimistic), there is room for hope. Hope will help you maintain that positive attitude.

**Step 4: Be Involved with Other People** Isolation and loneliness are sure ways to develop a pessimistic attitude. On the other hand, there is joy in connectedness. A willingness to give of yourself will lead to confidence and happiness and a great attitude. Not to mention that being involved with others is a growth experience in itself. This is a very important consideration for your academic career. Students who get the most out of college, who grow the most academically, and who are happiest, organize their time to include interpersonal activities with fellow students, built around substantive, academic work. If you don't have a habit of being a part of the lives of others, be very deliberate about this at first. Try listening to others. Take a genuine interest in the lives of others. Make a point of

thinking of something nice to do for someone else ahead of time. Put this task on your to-do list. Then carry it out.

*Step 5: Have Fun!!!* If you're in college and you're not having fun, something is wrong. There is room for the work you must do to achieve your goals and for fun, too. Life should be an adventure. You should be in college because you see the connection between the goals that get you excited about living and the education you are earning. You need a balance in your life of the work that improves your future and the fun that reminds you that it is all worthwhile.

## The Student Support Services Team:

Marshel Johnson  
Student Support Services Director  
(501) 337-0211  
mjohnson@otcweb.edu

Richard L. Wright  
Academic/Disability Counselor  
(501) 337-0213  
rwright@otcweb.edu

Clymesa Applewhite  
Transfer/Job Placement Counselor  
(501) 337-0215  
capplewhite@otcweb.edu

Diane Hurst  
Computer Lab/Tutor Coordinator  
(501) 337-0284  
dhurst@otcweb.edu

Lori Stafford  
Administrative Assistant  
(501) 337-0288  
lstafford@otcweb.edu

**Student Support Services** is a Title IV TRiO Program funded by the U.S. Department of Education. All services are FREE to qualified students.

## Eligibility for Services

To receive services, students must be:

- First generation college student and/or
- Eligible for financial assistance and/or
- Disabled

Ouachita Technical College  
One College Circle  
Malvern, Arkansas 72104  
(501) 337-5000 or (800) 337-0266



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