

New year, new attitude

By Andrea Bassett

Let me be honest with you. There's someone who drives me crazy. Her desk is a mess, she never thinks she's done enough, she likes long stretches of leisure but feels bad about not completing her to-do list. Annoying right? Especially because this exasperating person is me!

On the other hand, I'm really not so bad. But my attitude can be and that's what I resolve to change for 2015.

"When you change the way you look at things, the things you look at change."

- Max Planck, Nobel Prize-winning physicist

The attitude you adopt towards yourself, others and circumstances has a huge influence on how satisfied you feel with life. Deciding to make an adjustment for the better is a great choice for a New Year's resolution because you can start small and make success more likely to happen. But we each have to choose the right place to start.

Narrowing down the focus of your attitude adjustment

If you're not sure where to begin, try asking yourself these questions:

- What situations stress me out the most? Which people?
- Who am I hardest on? Me or someone else?
- What happened the last time my attitude ruined the mood?
- What happened the last time I lost my cool?
- Typically, do I give people the benefit of the doubt or assume the worst?

Thinking about these questions may illuminate areas you would prefer to leave in the dark. You might not like what you see, but that's okay. By now, you may have spotted an area ripe for an attitude adjustment.

Consider joining me on my quest as I resolve to improve my attitude in 2015!

I'll focus my attitude adjustment on not beating myself up for my real or imagined deficiencies. Of course, I have real shortcomings: I don't clean my oven more than once every two years, I'm not good at mingling, and I'm bad about returning phone calls. But are these the things that bother me? No! What really bothers me are the little thoughts about sometimes ridiculous little things.

For example, when I get home after work, I find the idea of cutting up vegetables for dinner daunting, overwhelming, like an insurmountable obstacle. Then my mind gets whirring and

instead of seeing the situation for what it truly is (I'm tired after work), I beat myself up for finding a 10-minute task so dispiriting. This mental self-flagellation isn't helping me. So, I'm going to stop. Right now!

But like many things, changing an attitude is easier said than done. So, let's start small.

How to change your attitude for the better

- Identify the thoughts that trigger an attitude you're trying to adjust. If you're trying to give people the benefit of the doubt, watch for thoughts that indicate you aren't – he's trying to make me look bad, she did that to hurt my feelings, etc.
- Look for the truth of the matter. Next time you've got a thought fueling a negative attitude, stop and ask yourself if it's true. Often, we jump to wildly untrue conclusions!
- Start a gratitude journal. Taking a few minutes each day to write down the things we're grateful for makes us happier and more optimistic.
- Exercise! Jumping around is NOT your New Year's resolution, but physical activity eases the burden of an overactive mind, making it easier to change your outlook.

Resolutions are a challenge so focus your efforts to maximize your results. Changing your attitude for the better will reap a very impressive return on investment.

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