



The Power of Attitude

“What we think determines what happens to us, so if we want to change our lives, we need to stretch our minds.” – Dr. Wayne Dyer, best-selling author.

Secretly wishing that the broccoli on your plate were a sweet potato... is opinion. Scraping it back into the pot and storming out of the kitchen... is attitude.

If attitude simply meant personal opinion, it would be a lot easier to address. We could just agree that we all have opinions, and as a rule, we keep them to ourselves. No harm done. End of discussion. However, one of the ways the dictionary defines attitude is “a learned way to respond to people or situations.” That word “respond” takes it up a notch. It suggests that attitude connects our opinions to our actions. It drives behavior, which in turn means that there is no keeping our attitude to ourselves. It’s there for all to see.

And complex as we are, our attitudes pretty much fall into one of two opposing categories: positive and negative. Positive is good; negative, not so much.

With bariatric surgery patients, a positive attitude is more than just a good idea. It’s an essential component of healthy weight loss and weight maintenance. It builds on the effectiveness of the surgery. A negative attitude on the other hand, is a tear-down.

No question about it, your weight loss surgery is a life-changing event. And your ultimate success depends largely on the way you think about the changes and adjustments you experience after surgery. If you focus on the positive changes, you’ll find your thoughts lead to positive actions – which in turn lead to better health.

However, Mr. Negative Thinking wants his side to be heard, too. He’ll try to keep you focused on what you’re missing, such as cake and ice cream. He’ll remind you that you now have loose skin to deal with, and that you have to replace your old sedentary ways with new ones involving exercise. He’ll make it all sound like it’s just not worth the effort. But Mr. Negative doesn’t have to get his way. Thankfully, negative attitudes and their corresponding behaviors are within our ability to change.

Take a quick inventory of your thoughts, attitudes and behaviors and then try the following program to align your attitude with the weight-loss success you desire:

1. First, make a “gratitude list” (which, interestingly, rhymes with “attitude list”) of things that you are grateful for. Then post it somewhere that you’ll see it throughout the day.

This list might include things like fitting into the bathtub, buying clothes in a ‘regular’ size, taking less medication, being able to move with less pain, the healthy new roles food and activity play in nourishing your mind and body, and countless other ways that your life has improved. You’ll soon have a list that puts Mr. Negative’s little list to shame.

2. Train yourself to become aware of your thoughts before they become actions. Learn to view the so-called negatives as the positives they really are. When you catch yourself thinking, “I have to exercise,” replace that thought with, “I finally *get* to exercise.” When you find yourself thinking, “I feel left out when my co-workers celebrate with sugary desserts,” replace it with “Next time, I’ll bring a delicious sugar-free dessert. They’ll love it.”

3. Look for opportunities to share your positive lifestyle choices with others. Ask a co-worker to walk with you at lunch. Reduce the amount of added sugar in your children’s diets. Pack your spouse’s lunch. Encourage family bike rides. And lastly, remember...

4. Surround yourself with positive, supportive people. Attitudes are contagious. Barix Clinics message boards are a great place to find that kind of support. Let the honest, caring, and helpful tone of the postings strengthen your resolve to stay positive.

If only it were as easy as simply choosing not to have any negative situations in our lives. But life doesn’t work that way for any of us. What we can do, however, is simply choose not to focus on them. We all have plenty to be grateful for, especially if we’re on a positive journey to better health. Meditating on that fact alone is plenty enough to send Mr. Negative packing for good. And that’s one more thing to be grateful for.

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