Your Attitude Counts

Case: Who Has a Positive Attitude?

Carlos is a senior in high school and cocaptain of the soccer team. He has many friends and being popular is important to him. He is looking forward to going away to college next year. He hopes to join the college soccer team. Carlos plans to work hard and do well in school and in his career.

After the big homecoming game, Carlos is invited to a party at Jason's home. Jason has spread the word that his parents are out of town, and he has invited everybody. Carlos doesn't know Jason very well, but he has heard that Jason gives fun parties. However, the fact that no adults will be there makes Carlos nervous. He asks Nick, his best friend and team cocaptain, what they should do. Nick says, "Are you kidding? Of course we should go. The best parties are the ones without parents!"

When Carlos and Nick arrive at the party, they find lots of people and loud music. Carlos is having a great time, until he sees three boys carrying cases of beer into the kitchen. "I'm getting out of here," he says to himself. He knows that if his coach finds out that he was at a beer party, he will be kicked off the team. He tells Nick they should go, but Nick says, "Hey, man, no harm, no foul." Nick explains that if they don't drink anything, it's okay to stay.

About an hour later, the doorbell rings. Two police officers enter the house. A neighbor called to report underage kids drinking beer and acting wild. The police see open beer cans and ask the teens for their IDs. All are underage, and the police give each an underage drinking ticket. They all must attend a three-hour course on underage drinking and pay $20 to cover its cost.

Nick says, "Don't tell the coach about it. We didn't drink any beer, so why tell him?" However, Carlos decides to tell his parents and his coach. He's afraid they will find out anyway. The coach gives Carlos another chance, and his parents believe his explanation. Carlos tells them that he will be more careful about the parties he goes to.

When Carlos attends the course, he listens and participates in the discussions. He leaves knowing that he has learned how to handle situations involving alcohol. Carlos is glad to have this knowledge before going off to college.

Nick, on the other hand, is resentful. He feels unfairly forced to go to the underage-drinking course because he was not drinking at the party. Besides, he thinks underage drinking is okay, as long as you don't get drunk.

Nick attends the course but sits in the back. While the group talks, he plays games on his cell phone. He avoids talking to anyone. Nick thinks the course is a waste of time. He is worried about what will happen if his parents or the coach find out about the party.

1. What is your reaction to this case?
2. Describe Carlos's attitude about getting the ticket.
3. Describe Nick's attitude about getting the ticket.
4. What would you have done if you were faced with the same situation?
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**Analyze**

An attitude is a belief or feeling that causes you to act in a certain way. You may have a specific attitude about a person, situation, or idea. You may have a general attitude about life. Your attitudes often affect your behavior toward others. Some attitudes are weak and easy to change. Others are strongly held and very hard to change.

**Attitudes Are Learned**

Where do attitudes come from? Attitudes are usually developed over the years. You learn attitudes from family and friends, the media and school. Your community and cultural background also influence your attitudes. You process all your experiences, and the results are your attitudes. These attitudes are reflected in your personality and behavior. Whether your attitudes are positive or negative depends on what you experience and learn and how you react to that.

**Attitudes Can Be Positive or Negative**

People with a positive attitude look on the bright side of situations and people. They are optimistic. When problems occur, they do not blame others. They take action to make things better. People with positive attitudes are usually happy and enjoy making others happy.

People with a negative attitude look on the dark side of situations and people. They are pessimistic. When problems occur, they blame others. They do not take action to make things better. People with negative attitudes are usually angry or sad. They often don’t even notice other people.

A positive attitude makes learning and changing easier. Carlos went to the party to have fun. He made a mistake in staying at the party when the others started drinking alcohol. However, he was open-minded and willing to learn from his mistake. As a result, he will be able to make better decisions in the future. His positive attitude also had a positive influence on the others in the course.

On the other hand, a negative attitude can cause problems in getting along with people and can interfere with learning. Nick also went to the party to enjoy himself. He did not think it was a mistake to stay at the party after the drinking started. When the police gave him a ticket for underage drinking, he felt unjustly punished. He did not think he was wrong. His attitude toward the police and the course on underage drinking was negative. He was closed-minded and unwilling to learn. He ignored the course, which cut him off from new experiences and new people. He did not learn any new ideas that could be useful to him in the future.

**Attitudes Reflect Values**

Your attitudes reflect your values. If you see yourself as an honest person, you will reject attitudes that allow cheating and stealing. If you see yourself as a victim, you may expect the worst to happen to you. You may develop an attitude that views cheating and stealing as okay because life is unfair.

**Attitudes Can Change**

Attitudes are learned, but they are not carved in stone. It’s true that you cannot change your parents or your experiences, but you can change your attitudes. You have the power to choose which attitudes to accept and which to reject. You can change your attitudes to match the kind of person you want to be.

Think about the kind of person you want to be. Pay attention to how people respond to your words and actions. These observations can help you evaluate your choices and the attitudes behind them. Your evaluations can help you decide which attitudes you want to keep and which you want to change.

Education can lead to changes in attitude. Some negative attitudes are based on lack of information. Learning new information can change negative attitudes into positive attitudes. Reading novels, biographies, and psychology texts shows you how other people think. As you learn more, you begin to understand different points of view. Your mind opens to new ideas, and your attitudes may change.

The simple fact of maturing and having new life experiences can lead to changes in attitude. As a teenager, you may vow that you will never give your child an early curfew or take the car keys away because of poor grades. When you marry and have your own children, your attitude is likely to change. Instead of being the teen, you will be the parent worrying about your child’s safety and well-being. Your new point of view may cause you to realize that your parents were not being too harsh. They were enforcing limits that were in your best interests.

**Attitudes Vary**

Today’s workforce consists of a diverse mix of people. You may find yourself working with people from different races, cultures, and religious backgrounds. You may work with people of all ages. Your coworkers may come from a variety of economic backgrounds. They may have widely different experiences, opinions, and attitudes. Human relations skills are essential in this type of workplace. In order to work together productively, people must cooperate in spite of their differences.

Adopt the attitude that differences present opportunities. People do not need to think or act alike to do a good job. Different opinions can lead to creativity and better problem solving.

**Attitudes Show**

Many supervisors are skilled in reading the attitudes of their employees. You show your attitude in many ways:

- in your approach to school or a job
- in your willingness to follow directions
- in the way you handle problems
- in your reaction to criticism
- in the way you relate to coworkers
- in the way you relate to people in authority

**Attitudes Can Be Contagious**

A positive attitude makes human relations much easier. It can be good for your career and your personal life. How? Positive attitudes can be contagious. People often respond to a positive attitude by becoming positive themselves.

**Discuss**

1. What choices did Carlos and Nick have after the police arrived at the party?

2. How does Carlos’s decision reflect his attitude and values?

3. How does Nick’s decision reflect his attitude and values?

4. Was Nick smart to keep his mouth shut?
Case: A New Coworker

You have a part-time job in the inventory department of a large retail store. The job requires that you work closely with another coworker. The two of you have a lot in common—the same sense of humor, work ethic, and outside interests. You become good friends and look forward to going to work everyday. You challenge each other and invent ways to get more work done faster. Then your friend decides to leave for another job. You will miss her, but know that you will have an opportunity to build another good relationship.

Your new coworker is older than you. He doesn’t seem very friendly and doesn’t talk about his interests. He doesn’t take your advice about how to approach the work. You begin to feel bored and can’t wait for the day to end. You are having a hard time working with this person. Your supervisor notices that you are not producing as well as before, and tells you to “get back on the ball.”

DISCUSS

1. List three options for dealing with your job situation.
   
   Option 1: ________________________________
   
   Option 2: ________________________________
   
   Option 3: ________________________________

2. List the option you would choose, and explain why you would choose it.
   
   ______________________________________
   
   ______________________________________
   
   ______________________________________

REVIEW

True or False

Circle T if the statement is true or F if the statement is false.

T F 1. Attitude affects how a person interacts with others.

T F 2. Attitudes are always strongly held.

T F 3. Positive attitudes make it harder to learn new concepts.

T F 4. A person can make a decision to change his or her attitude about something.

T F 5. Attitudes are formed at birth and are unchanging.

T F 6. Although education is important, it has little effect on attitude.

T F 7. Lack of information can cause a person to form a negative attitude.

T F 8. The diversity in the workforce today makes human relations skills less important.

T F 9. Supervisors and coworkers can read a person’s attitude in his or her behavior.

T F 10. A positive attitude is contagious.

Check Your Understanding

1. Explain how attitudes develop.
   ______________________________________
   
2. Describe a person with a positive attitude.
   ______________________________________
   
3. Describe a person with a negative attitude.
   ______________________________________
   
4. Give an example of how an attitude affects behavior.
   ______________________________________
   
5. Give an example that shows how attitudes can change.
   ______________________________________
   
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