


AN ATTITUDE INDEPENDENT OF CIRCUMSTANCES...

In my observation of really successful people one thing I regularly notice they all have in common is that their moods and the decisions they make are not dependent on the urgent and immediate circumstances in their lives. This is most certainly not the norm, in fact most people seem to act and react based on their current circumstances. When things are going well for them they are happy and make better decisions. However when life throws challenges at them they tend to react and make decisions that in the long term make their circumstances worse rather than better. This was very true for me.



Attitude is a little thing that makes a big difference

--Winston Churchill

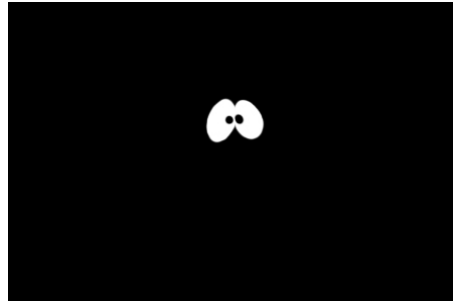
I think I have told the story about when I found out that I had been sacked from the St Kilda Football club by reading it in the newspaper. After I had read the news I had two choices about how to respond; one was independent of circumstances and one was a totally emotional reaction to the situation. I could have waited some time to process what had happened, called the club and made an appointment, found out where I needed to improve, worked hard and tried again. Or I could have reacted badly and 'spat the dummy'. I am sure you can guess which one I chose! I reacted badly!! I went into victim mode and blamed the club, blamed the coaches, sulked about the fact I was too skinny and held onto resentment for many years. By the time I had finally got over myself and realised that I was responsible for my outcomes it was too late to resurrect my AFL career. So the question for me was; who was most significantly impacted by my situation-dependent attitude? The answer - Me, and only me!

Every day situations

Every day we are challenged and every day our attitude put to the test. I would like to make this point loud and clear - how we handle challenging situations, not the situation itself, will determine how our lives turn out! A big statement? Maybe, but I may well have had a very successful AFL career if I had responded differently...

Laura and I were challenged just this week. We recently found out that our pup Joia has been going out into the courtyard at night when we were not home and barking for long periods. This had obviously been concerning our neighbors. We really had no idea this was happening until we got a letter from one of our neighbors suggesting that we might want to try and address it. Our only indication of Joia's barking came from a very unpleasant man who lives upstairs from us who would regularly yell at her and tell her to 'shut up'!

When we got home on Tuesday night at about 10:30 we walked in to find that we had no power. We checked and discovered that it was only our apartment without power and so we called the power company who told us that we had to get into a locked cupboard in the common carpark to flick a switch. Well we didn't have a key, and it was too late to call people so we decided to make do with candle light and wait until the morning.



Keep in mind, we didn't know when the power had gone off and it obviously had affected the lights, the clocks, the fridge and freezer, the computer and our ability to charge our mobile phones. I actually had to go down into the carpark where there was a power outlet at 11pm and waited there for half an hour while my phone charged. It was really very inconvenient!

Laura, being a very intuitive person, suspected that the unpleasant man who yelled at Joia had switched our power off because she had been barking. I couldn't believe that anyone would do that sort of thing when there were so many nicer ways to deal with the situation, but then I am a naïve and trusting person. The next morning I got on the phone to get our power back and got the run around from the real estate agent, the electrician and the body corporate who all told me that I needed to get the key to this cupboard, a key which none of them had it!!

Do what most people wouldn't do

While this was happening Laura was going around to the neighbors and apologising for Joia's barking and seeing if she could find a key to this power cupboard. We both agreed that we should go upstairs and knock on this unpleasant man's door. We could have very easily gone up there, pounded on his door, abused him and accused him of turning our power off which would have been a situation-dependent attitude! As much as we would have like to give him a piece of our mind, we went up politely knocked on his door and sincerely apologised for Joia's barking and any inconvenience it may have caused. This is where the fun began...



Coincidentally, about 10 minutes later our power came back on! Laura and her intuition were onto it - she wanted me to go down and see who was in the cupboard. I followed instructions like a good husband and I went downstairs to find the cupboard door open. I stood there and just watched to see who was there. Surprise, surprise the very same unpleasant man appeared from inside the power cupboard.

He was caught red handed! It was hilarious as he stumbled and spluttered trying to come up with an explanation as to why he was there. He knew he had been caught and so after a short time of trying to come up with a story

he just stopped, looked at me and waited for me to tear him to shreds. He looked ready to launch back at me with his own justification. I waited a few seconds and I said; 'thank you so much!' 'Why?' he asked with surprise. I continued, 'for putting our power back on. You obviously just turned it on and we are very grateful. Thank you.' I left him with a mystified look on his face not knowing how to react!

Think big picture

Okay, so let's have a look at this situation and see if we can find the lessons; there are several of them. I think the first and most important is to be able to think of the long term consequences of our attitudes, decisions and actions. If Laura and I had reacted aggressively or spitefully in the heat of the situation, as we may have liked to, what might have been the result? I would imagine a long term war with a vindictive and horrible person and a very uncomfortable living environment.

What would have happened if we hadn't gone up the stairs to apologise to him? I bet a lot of money that our power wouldn't have come back on in 10 minutes. What would have happened if I had attacked him verbally when I caught him out? I hate to think.

I have told this story to several people and we all agree that what he did was a low and cowardly act. Many people have suggested that we report him or get back at him somehow. Our attitude is that his own attitude is punishment enough and he will have to live with it for the rest of his miserable life. In the light of each morning he has to wake up 'him' and Laura and I are fortunate to wake up 'us' with our attitude independent of circumstances! We are actually very proud of how we handled it, but it has come from many years of experience, mistakes, personal development and learning from successful people.



Attitude of gratitude

You may be wondering what is there to be grateful for in this situation. I am a true believer that there is something to be grateful for in every situation if you can think beyond the circumstances. I am grateful for what we have learnt and how we are now able to respond to such situations. Having gone without it for about 15 hours, I am grateful for power and what it allows us to do. There was no damage to anything during the time the power was off and so we saved money on electricity and we helped the environment for the 15 hours - for that I am grateful! I am especially grateful for my beautiful wife Laura.

An attitude independent of circumstances will take some deliberate time, practice and patience. I can tell you from personal experience that it is so worth it. Why not try it with something you come up against and challenges you this week?

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