

Attitude Is Everything
By Francie Baltazar-Schwartz

Jerry was the kind of guy you love to hate. He was always in a good mood. When someone would ask him how he was doing, he would reply, “If I was any better I would be twins.”

He was a unique manager because he had several waiters who had followed Jerry because of his attitude. He was a natural motivator. If an employee was having a bad day, Jerry was there telling the employee how to look on the bright side of the situation.

Seeing this style really made me curious, so one day I went up to Jerry and asked him, “I don’t get it! You can’t be a positive person all of the time. How do you do it?”

Jerry replied, “Each morning, I wake up and say to myself, Jerry you have two choices today. You can choose to be in a good mood or you can choose to be in a bad mood. I choose to be in a good mood. Each time something bad happens, I can choose to be a victim or I can choose to learn from it. I choose to learn from it. Every time someone comes to me complaining, I can choose to accept their complaining or I can point out the positive side of life. I choose the positive side of life.”

“Yeah right it’s not that easy,” I protested.

“Yes it is,” Jerry said. “Life is all about choices. When you cut away all the junk, every situation is a choice. You choose how to react to situations. You choose how people will affect your mood. You choose to be in a good mood or bad. The bottom line is: It’s your choice how you live life.”

I reflected on what Jerry said. Soon thereafter, I left the restaurant industry to start my own business. We lost touch, but often I thought about him when I made a choice about life instead of reacting to it. Several years later, I heard that Jerry did something you’re never supposed to do in the restaurant business: He left the back door open one morning and was held up at gunpoint by three armed robbers. While trying to open the safe, his hand, shaking from nervousness, slipped off the combination. The robbers panicked and shot him.

Luckily, Jerry was rushed to a local trauma center. After 18 hours of surgery and weeks of intensive care, Jerry was released from the hospital with fragments of the bullet still inside of him. I saw Jerry about six months after the accident. When I asked him how he was doing he said, “If I was any better I’d be twins. Wanna’ see my scars?”

I declined to see his wounds, but I did ask him what went through his mind during the robbery. “The first thing that went through my mind was I should have locked the back door,” Jerry replied. As I lay on the floor, I remembered that I had two choices: I could choose to live or I could choose to die. I chose to live.

“Weren’t you scared? Did you lose consciousness?” I asked. Jerry continued, “The paramedics were great. They kept telling me that I was going to be fine. But when they wheeled me into the emergency room I saw the expressions of the nurses and doctors and, I got really scared. In their eyes I read, “He’s a dead man.” I knew I had to take action.

“What did you do?” I asked.

“Well, there was a big blurry nurse shouting questions at me,” said Jerry. She asked if I was allergic to anything. “Yes,” I replied.

The doctors and nurses stopped working as they waited for my reply. I took a deep breath and yelled out “bullets.” Over their laughter I told them that I am choosing to live. Operate on me as if I am alive, not dead.” Jerry lived thanks to the skill of his doctors, but also because of his amazing attitude. I learned from him that we have to choose to live fully. Attitude, after all, is everything.