JOYFUL MUSINGS
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Attitude is Everything

Some years ago I gave my four-year-old free-spirited temper-tantrum-throwing niece a T-shirt that proclaimed Attitude is Everything. Someday, when she learns to harness that awesome power, she'll have the world on a string.

For those of us ready to harness that power today, there's a phenomenal belief system called Attitudinal Healing. Its roots began in the mid-'70s when psychiatrist Gerald Jampolsky saw a need to help children cope with life-threatening illnesses. It evolved over the years to become an international organization offering services and peer-support groups for adults and children in all varieties of life situations.

At the heart of AH is a belief in the extraordinary ability of ordinary people to help one another, and the idea that we have the power to choose our attitude in any given moment, regardless of circumstances. Jampolsky's book, *Love is Letting Go of Fear,* presents seven basic tenets of Attitudinal Healing:

At core, human nature is positive, constructive, and self-correcting. AH regards our primary identity as spiritual and affirms that every individual is an inherently positive and constructive being who is loving and compassionate in nature.

Health is inner peace, healing is letting go of fear. Psychological distress is essentially the result of a fearful attitude. Fear is the loss of personal power, and choosing to be at peace is a return to the calm, clarity, and sense of dignity that is the seat of personal power. Neuroscience has found that a sustained feeling of inner peace leads not only to emotional stability, it also improves cognitive power and physical health.

We are not victims of the world we see. It is not people or circumstances outside ourselves that cause us conflict or distress, rather it is our own thoughts, feelings, and attitudes about those people and events.

The purpose of communication is joining. Attaining and sustaining our connection to others involves a willingness to listen with an open heart and relate non-judgmentally, accepting others exactly as they are and by holding an unconditional positive regard for their person.

Forgiveness is the key to well-being. Forgiveness releases the present from the past and thereby frees the future. Forgiving does not mean we condone actions that are immoral or harmful. Nor does it necessarily mean that we allow a misguided person back into our lives. It is the

recognition that "unforgiveness" is a decision to suffer and that forgiveness is a decision to reclaim our inner peace.

We are rarely upset for the reason we think. Instead of present reality, what we often see is a reflection of our painful past or feared future. This makes us prone to misperceive people and situations and causes us to react to things that are not really going on.

Now is the only time there is. The present moment is the only time that is real. The past resides in memory; the future in imaginings. If we are pointlessly preoccupied with the past and future, we miss this moment, and to miss this moment is to miss our lives.

In accordance with these tenets, AH teaches twelve principles. These principles introduce the dynamic of choice and acknowledge our own inner wisdom. When we are not experiencing our naturally loving or compassionate nature, it is because fear is blocking our ability to do so. It is up to us to choose whether we wish to move through the fear, conflict, or separation we are feeling and experience peace of mind.

AH is not a religion; it is a philosophy. People from many cultures, faiths, and denominations, as well as those who follow no faith follow its teachings. Maybe Patti LaBelle was practicing AH when she sang:

"I'm feelin' good from my head to my shoes,
Know where I'm goin' and I know what to do.
I tidied up my point of view,
I got a new attitude.
I'm in control, my worries are few,
'Cause I've got love like I never knew.
Ooh, ooh, ooh, ooh, ooh,
I got a new attitude."