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COLUMNIST

DEAR CHIEF: I was just reading in a magazine that if someone wants to change their attitude toward something that they need to change their behavior first. This doesn't make sense. I learned in a leadership seminar that one's attitude determines their behavior. So I'm a little confused. If I want to make a positive change in my life, what should I adjust first, my attitude or my behavior?

CONFUSED ABOUT CHANGE



DEAR CONFUSED ABOUT CHANGE: I understand your frustration. This process has been debated by some leadership consultants for years so you will get differing opinions about it. Some say you should change your thinking and attitude first which, in turn, drives a change in your behavior. Others say change your behavior first, regardless of your attitude, then an eventual change in attitude will occur by virtue of your actions. Both methods can work but if you're not getting results in your attempt at making a change, then the latter of the two methods will work much better.

If you don't truly “feel” like doing

Actions first, Attitude second

something that you know will enable positive change in your life, then you probably won't “do anything” about it, and the change you're striving for will not happen. On the other hand, if you begin “doing” something regardless of how you “feel,” chances are your motivation will increase with your actions and in no time your attitude will change as well.

For instance, if you don't feel like exercising when you know you should, just get started anyway. After about 10 or 15 minutes, the exhilaration you feel will affect your attitude about exercising. You'll be more motivated to exercise with vigor and interest and you'll truly “feel” like continuing to work out.

In another instance, if your attitude toward another person is negative and you have no desire to treat that person nicely, try being nice to them anyway and you'll discover that eventually your attitude toward them will become more positive.

Or perhaps you don't feel like doing lawn work. Instead of avoiding it, just get started on it and soon enough your feelings about it will change. The same can go for schoolwork. Once you get rolling and experience a sense of

accomplishment, your attitude about it changes.

You certainly want to have a good attitude toward people, things, and activities as your quality of life and durations of success can depend on it. You are the only person in the world who has the power to make your attitude better or more positive because you have the ability “to act.”

Dr. William Glasser, a psychiatrist who developed the concepts of Reality Therapy and Choice Theory, said, “If you want to change attitudes, start with a change in behavior. In other words, begin to act the part, as well as you can, of the person you would rather be, of the person you most want to become. Gradually, the old, fearful person will fade away.”

Real change requires action first and attitude second. You must “act” yourself into changing. Begin demonstrating the positive change you want in your life and it'll be so!



For an opportunity to have your question, issue or concern addressed in the Dear Chief column, go to www.DearChiefAdvice.com and submit your comments or email them to Jeff@DearChiefAdvice.com.