

SOURCE LINES

Attitude is Everything

While most of us thrive on being busy there are some days when finding balance can seem like an endless juggling-act with more and more in the air. On those days when we glimpse what seems like our breaking-point we think about how to lessen the growing stress in our lives. When this happens we usually look to reduce things and demands outside ourselves: like how to slow the accelerating pace of life, or how to manage the competition for our attention and efforts that leaves us over-stretched and vulnerable in our families and at work. There is compelling evidence that the pace of life is getting out of hand. Unfortunately there are no readily available solutions to this increasingly global phenomenon. However, there is an opportunity to lighten our stress-load that is right inside of us – by changing some of the ways we think about our life and the world around us.

Think of it for a minute. When there has been some difficulty or frustration how often have you heard or said “I really got twisted out of shape.” What is it that got “twisted”? It’s our thoughts about the situation. Some people call it “attitude”. And our attitude can affect whether something is a burden to us or an opportunity.

In his book The Healing Power of Humor, Allen Klein, relates

“People are disturbed not by things, but how they view them.”

1st century Greek philosopher, Epictetus

the story of 3 labourers on a work-site during the Middle Ages. A man goes and asks them what they are doing. The first labourer says “What are you, blind? I’m doing impossibly boring, back-breaking work in the blazing sun — working with primitive tools to cut huge boulders and put them where I am told to by the boss. This boring job will be the death of me.” The second labourer explains that he is shaping boulders according to an architect’s plan. “It’s hard work and sometimes repetitive but I earn five francs a week and that supports the wife and kids. It’s a job. It could be worse.” The third labourer replies “Why, can’t you see?” He lifts his arm to the sky and says, “I’m building a cathedral.” Which of the three labourers are you most like? And do you see, like Epictetus almost 2000 years ago, that while we can’t always control what happens to us, we do have a choice about

how we see what is happening to us?

The following anonymously written poem is in five “chapters”. Which one best represents your basic attitude towards your life?

An Autobiography in Five Chapters

Chapter 1

I walk down the street.
There is a deep hole in the sidewalk.
I fall in.
I am lost. . . I am helpless.
It isn’t my fault.
It takes forever to find a way out.

Chapter 2

I walk down the same street.
There is a deep hole in the sidewalk.
I pretend I don’t see it.
I fall in, again.
I can’t believe I am in this same place.
But it isn’t my fault.
It still takes a long time to get out.

Chapter 3

I walk down the same street.
There is a deep hole in the sidewalk.
I see it is there.
I fall in . . . It’s a habit . . . But my eyes are open.
I know where I am.
It is my fault.
I get out immediately.

Chapter 4

I walk down the same street.
There is a deep hole in the sidewalk.
I walk around it.

Chapter 5

I walk down a different street.

If you would like to talk with one of our counsellors about any of the holes in your sidewalk please don’t hesitate to give us a call for a confidential conversation.

The next 2 issues of Source Lines will look more fully at obstacles and solutions to a creative and less stress producing attitude.

SOURCE LINE, INC.

94 CUMBERLAND STREET, SUITE 604, TORONTO, ONTARIO, M5R 1A3

416-923-0868 / 1-800-394-8015

Email: reachus@sourceline.net Web Site: www.sourceline.net

Offices in Toronto, Mississauga, Woodbridge and Newmarket with EAP Associates Across Canada