

# How Attitudes Affect Grades

## What are attitudes?

**American Heritage Dictionary**—State of mind

**Webster 9<sup>th</sup> New World Dictionary** – Mental position related to a fact or state.

**Psychology: The Short Course** – An expectancy; organization of concepts.

**McKeachie and doyle** – Beliefs, habits, and motives associated with a particular object.

In the simplest sense, it appears an attitude is **some state of mind about an object, fact or situation**. Since attitudes are revealed through our behavior, the way we behave lets others know our state of mind about something.

It was once believed that attitudes were unchangeable and once acquired, we were stuck with them. Now we know this is **not true**. Psychologists say that we tend to do what we tell ourselves to do. Therefore, if we have negative attitudes, these negative attitudes affect what we expect of ourselves which in turn, affects our actions. For example, those with the negative attitude that they "can't do math", are almost assured of trouble when attempting math. A negative attitude limits performance, saps motivation, and inhibits learning.

## What do you have negative attitudes about?

### How do these attitudes affect your performance?

There is no guarantee that you will *instantly* be able to understand mathematics through eliminating a negative attitude about math. A less inhibiting attitude like "*in the past I may have not done well at math, but I can still learn to do math and earn better grades in the future,*" removes self-imposed limits.

This more positive attitude *creates the opportunity for learning and motivation* that leads to success in math **regardless of past performance**. By changing this negative attitude into a positive one, the door is opened to the possibility of not only learning math but becoming superior at it, **regardless of past performance**. Positive attitudes combat frustration from self-imposed limits on your potential to change through learning.

The basic premise underlying any teaching is that the pupil has the capacity to learn and change and wants these things to happen regardless of past performance. Negative attitudes discourage, limit, and even prevent learning, positive change, and growth. What are your attitudes about learning, teachers,

certain subjects, or becoming a better student? What effect have these attitudes had on your potential to learn and earn excellent grades?

Changing an attitude *is possible*. For success in acquiring attitudes that promote your success *you must be willing to admit and face the truth about yourself and admit and face the truth about what you are willing to change*.

One model for doing so is presented below. Complete the following exercise and see how you can replace negative attitudes that may have limited your success in college.

### Steps

1. **Identify a negative or limiting attitude** you have about something related to college and write it down here. It may be academic, personal, or social. It is important to do this because unless you identify what it is you want to change, change is unlikely to occur. Record it below.
  - a. Limiting attitude:
2. **Declare to yourself that you intend to change.** In this step, 1) write down a statement that reflects your intention to change the limiting attitude above. Also, 2) re-word the limiting attitude from step 1 into a positive statement and write it down here. It is important to do this because you tend to do what you tell yourself to do and what you tell yourself to do is influenced by your attitudes.
  - a. \_\_\_\_\_
  - b. \_\_\_\_\_
3. **List 3 people who you believe currently have the positive attitude you recorded in Number 2 above.** For each person, include what s/he does that communicates that s/he has this attitude. This is important to do because we tend to become like people we admire or with which we surround ourselves.
  - a. \_\_\_\_\_
  - b. \_\_\_\_\_
  - c. \_\_\_\_\_
4. **List 3 different behaviors or actions you can do that could lead others to believe you have this new attitude.** By practicing the expression of your new attitude, you create the opportunity to become better at it and see the results. Positive results speed habitualization of desired attitudes.
  - a. \_\_\_\_\_
  - b. \_\_\_\_\_
  - c. \_\_\_\_\_
5. **Describe 3 situations in which you commonly find yourself where you could practice the 3 behaviors or actions listed above.** We tend to do what we practice and what we practice often enough becomes habitual.
  - a. \_\_\_\_\_

- b. \_\_\_\_\_  
c. \_\_\_\_\_
6. **List 3 people you could talk to about changing and becoming more the person you want to be.**  
We tend to do what we tell others we intend to do.
- a. \_\_\_\_\_  
b. \_\_\_\_\_  
c. \_\_\_\_\_
7. **List 3 times during the day when you intend to visualize what you will be like and how you will feel** once you acquire this new attitude and master expressing it. We tend to do what we visualize ourselves doing.
- a. \_\_\_\_\_  
b. \_\_\_\_\_  
c. \_\_\_\_\_
8. **Write down at least one way to reward yourself** for acting in a way that demonstrates your new attitude. We tend to repeat those behaviors and patterns of thinking for which we are rewarded.
- a. \_\_\_\_\_  
b. \_\_\_\_\_  
c. \_\_\_\_\_

Life is full of impediments and problems. That may be why humans developed such a complicated brain; to solve problems that ultimately lead to success and survival.

***Each problem is an opportunity for success.*** In fact, many believe solving problems is the **only way** to be successful. How you approach life's problems, which are **your opportunities for your success**, is largely dependent on the attitudes you choose to keep or acquire. How quickly you become the person you want to be is *your choice*.