

## Enthusiasm and Attitude

When employers look at prospective candidates, beyond skills, experience, and training, they look for those who demonstrate enthusiasm – those they believe will complete assigned tasks in an upbeat and cooperative manner. All other things being equal, a candidate who can demonstrate a positive attitude and eagerness to tackle the job will have an advantage over one who displays an attitude viewed by the employer as negative or disinterested.

Having a positive attitude in the workplace can help with potential promotions. Employers promote employees who not only produce, but also motivate others in the workplace.

In fact, many employers would rather provide job skills training to an enthusiastic but inexperienced worker than hire someone with perfect qualifications but a less than-positive attitude. Managers sometimes worry that this type of person will not get along with supervisors and co-workers, treat customers disrespectfully, and not put much effort into his or her work. On the other hand, employees who are viewed as enthusiastic are known to provide good customer service, resolve interpersonal conflict effectively, and work productively with others.

There are many ways in which an individual might demonstrate enthusiasm in the workplace. For example, in a job interview, he or she might smile, sit up straight, make eye contact, and discuss training and work experiences in an upbeat manner. Once hired into a position, an enthusiastic employee will typically show up on time, show interest in his or her job, and demonstrate a willingness to listen, learn, and try new things. In customer service settings, an enthusiastic employee will approach customers proactively and offer assistance or seek out tasks and projects when there is down time. This positive attitude helps employees go above and beyond to get along with co-workers and managers – even difficult ones – and respond to constructive criticism with maturity and willingness to improve.



Overall, an employee with enthusiasm comes across as someone who wants to be at work and who is willing to do what it takes to get the job done.

The activities in this section seek to teach participants about the importance of enthusiasm and a positive attitude in the workplace.

Participants will hear strategies for turning negative thinking into positive thinking and displaying and discussing enthusiasm during an interview and on the job.

**Note to facilitators:** A positive attitude is an “I can” attitude. Young people with real or perceived barriers to employment (such as those who struggle academically possibly due to a learning or other disability, have been in and out of foster homes, have dropped out of school, or are raising a baby) may not have experienced enough success to feel or demonstrate this attitude. The activities in this section offer an opportunity for you to help all youth learn how to develop a positive attitude and, almost as important, how to learn to showcase that to others, including employers. Regardless of the challenges young people have conquered, developing and displaying a positive attitude will often help them to surpass their peers in many aspects of life.

What is the difference between “You’re hired!” and “Thank you for your interest, but...”? In a word: enthusiasm. Enthusiasm can mean the difference in not just getting a job, but succeeding in a job and even advancing in your career. A positive and enthusiastic attitude is a critical component of workplace success.

**JUST THE FACTS:** PMA, or Positive Mental Attitude, is one’s ability to maintain the belief that he or she can transform or change a tough situation into something better. This activity will help participants take difficult



situations and find ways to EMPOWER themselves to turn negative thinking into positive thinking. Time 20 minutes

## Materials

Directions Pose the following questions to participants. (This can be accomplished by group discussion or by smaller groups discussing together and then presenting to the larger group.)

- What is a positive attitude? If I have a positive attitude, what actions might I display? What does a positive attitude “look” like to others? •
- What is a negative attitude? If I have a negative attitude, what actions might I display? What does a negative attitude “look” like to others?

Then say: Developing a positive attitude starts from learning to believe in one's self. In order to believe in ourselves, we must first understand our personal strengths. In this activity, you will be considering and sharing your personal strengths.

Break participants into groups of four. Write the below statements on a piece of chart paper for all to see, or have a “cheat sheet” at each table for reference. You might choose to create a chart and draw a picture of each roll of the dice (for those who learn best from pictures) on one side and write the corresponding statement on the other.

Each participant will take turns rolling the dice two or three times and complete the following statement upon each roll:

Roll a 1: I am thankful for... Roll a 2: Other people compliment me on my ability to... Roll a 3: Something I would like other people to know about me is... Roll a 4: I feel really good about myself when.... Roll a 5: I am proud of my ability to... Roll a 6: Something nice I recently did for someone else was...

- One rolling die for each small group. Alternatively, you can use a “cut out” cube and create it to look like a single dice, using either numbers one



through six or the typical dots found on rolling dice. An easy cube shaped cut-out can be found at <http://www.leslietryon.com/3dcolorcutout/cube.html>

- Optional: Chart paper/markers NOTE: If the group knows each other well, feel free to substitute questions that ask about the positive qualities of their peers.

**Conclusion** Ask participants why the statement for Roll #6 was included in this activity? Answers should be directed toward the fact that helping or “doing” for others often helps people feel good about themselves. And, when we feel good about ourselves, we often demonstrate a positive attitude that can be seen by others.

Discuss with participants how internal feelings have the ability to impact those around us. How might a positive attitude help us on a job?

**Journaling Activity** Do you think our attitude (whether positive or negative) is something we are born with or that we have power to control within ourselves? Think about a time when your attitude (either positive or negative) impacted you and those around you. When is it most challenging for you to keep a positive mental attitude? What do you do to help keep yourself positive during difficult times?

**Extension Activity** Have participants keep a log for one week. Ask them to write down 50 (or 40 or 30) great things that happen each day. Encourage them to include even the small things like: someone held the door open for me....I found a quarter on the sidewalk...when I went shopping, the clerk at the store was really friendly and helpful. The goal of this activity is to have participants focus on the positive...and then discuss if they felt any different during the week as a result – either in their interactions with others or in their own feelings about themselves.

