

It's all in your attitude BY VIRGINIA DAKINIEWICH

There are always those people who make our heads turn – the girl with the vintage clothes and retro hairdo, the corporate type in a three piece suit owning the sidewalk, the buff woman striding around the gym or the senior with that extra little spring in his step. What sets them apart from the crowd? It's all about attitude.

Attitude is how we see ourselves and how we present it to the world, a mirror of our inner selves. We express our attitude in many ways, by our actions and what we say, also non-verbally with facial expressions and gestures. Clothing, hairstyle, leisure activities, even our consumer choices reflect our attitudes. Attitude can be as subtle as a silk scarf tied in a novel way or as obvious as doing cartwheels down the street. Some of us express our attitudes as naturally as breathing, while the rest of us are content to schlep along with the crowd.

Our attitudes towards ourselves are heavily influenced by family of origin. If you were reared in a pre-boomer household, with depression or WW2 era parents, it was about conformity, following the rules and deferring to authority. During the 70's 80's and 90's, generations Y and Z were reared in more permissive and tolerant atmospheres. Baby boomer parents, inundated by Dr. Spock, flower power and *I'm OK, You're OK*, placed less emphasis on strict discipline and confor-

mity. Expressing attitude also depends on where you live. Some cultures place emphasis on being reserved and circumspect. In some countries, displaying too much attitude might even land you in trouble with the law or worse.

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Attitude is determined by belief – it is what you believe about yourself that counts. If you believe you are an intelligent, attractive person, then this will be projected outwards. In this age of plastic, injections and botox, there is a larger emphasis than ever before on appearance. Looks can still play an important part in how we are perceived by others. A very average looking person who has a positive self image will ultimately project better than an attractive person with a poor self-image. A so-called bad attitude is immediately obvious. Arrogance, aggressiveness and hostility are turn-offs for most people. If we feel pessimistic and have low self esteem, we can come across very negatively to others. Another disadvantage of projecting a poor attitude



is that you are basically sending a signal for others to dislike, disrespect, ignore or even mistreat you. Despite projecting a positive, self-assured attitude, you can become a target of criticism or envy from those who are less confident or feel badly about themselves. Someone who is confident can be a definite affront to those who are insecure, angry, or simply having a bad day.

Of course it is impractical to go around

radiating attitude all the time. You shouldn't go to your employer and start spouting off your manifesto about company policy. It is probably also not a good idea to dress like Morticia Addams or Frank-N-Furter at the office party just because you feel like a little self-expression. There are situations where it simply isn't practical to project too much attitude – meeting your in-laws, bank loan managers, law enforcement officers, customs officials, potential employers and so on.

We all need to express a bit of attitude now and then, express our individuality, our uniqueness. Attitude is what sets us apart. It can give that extra spark, that zing. The next time you find yourself wanting to blend into the background, ask yourself why. If you want to be comfortable showing a bit of attitude, start small. Try dressing with more individuality, use a bit of style and details that can set you apart. Try doing things that you enjoy, learn something new, or try something that you have always wanted to do. Take a different way home from work, shop at a different store, and try to look at things from a different perspective. We all have our own attitude somewhere inside. It is up to us to show it off to the world.

Editor's Remarks