



SOCIETY OF ACTUARIES

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Orchestrating Attitude—Part 2

Orchestrating Your Thoughts

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Editor's Note: Catch up on Part 1 of "Orchestrating Attitude" in the January 2008 issue of The Stepping Stone, and watch for Part 3, "Orchestrating Your Words," in the July 2008 issue.

Our thoughts and beliefs have incredible power to shape our lives and the lives of others. Unfortunately, life is not fair. We don't always get what we deserve. The good news is that **we receive what we believe in life.** This law of life works just as powerfully with negative thoughts as it does with positive thoughts.

Some people ask, "How can I be positive all the time when negative situations are a reality—they just show up in everyday life?" This is absolutely not true. Yes, bad things do happen and they sometimes "just show up." However, **it is our interpretations that make a situation negative.** A situation doesn't drag us down; the way we think about it does.

Like it or not, your thoughts and interpretations of circumstances directly influence your beliefs, and ultimately, our actions. Henry Ford said, "Whether you think you can or cannot, you're right." In other words, **what you think is what you get.**

The great news is that YOU are in control of what you think! No one else on earth has this power unless you give it away. You are the conductor of your own thoughts.

Let's take a look at three instruments for orchestrating your thoughts ... and think about them!

1. Choose your view.
2. Check your focus.
3. Control your inputs.

1. Choose Your View

Our experiences are much less important than how we choose to think about them. The way we interpret our experiences shapes our beliefs about the past. Furthermore, our interpretations either limit or enable our future success. For example, a mission-critical project you are leading has "promotion" written all over it, but it bombs—it's over budget, past its deadline ... the works. How you choose to interpret those facts is where you can shape your future. Are you a failure, a poor leader who is maxed out and on her way out? Or, are you a great leader in the making who is learning some tough lessons that will help ensure success on the next project when your true colors will show? Facts are facts, but the view you take is your choice.

If you find yourself having a negative thought, say "STOP!" out loud, and replace it with a positive thought. Saying "STOP!" out loud is important so that you can actually hear yourself controlling your own thinking. Let's see how it works.

A friend told me about a situation that used to drive him crazy. He would drive home after a hard day through rush hour traffic and find the driveway to his garage impassable, blocked by his children's bicycles and toys. He *reacted* something like this: "These kids have no sense of responsibility. They never pick up after themselves, and it's a hassle for me to move their junk just to get in the driveway."

Then he said, "STOP!" out loud. He decided to choose a more positive view and he *responded* with, "My kids are still kids. It looks like they had a great time today. Boy, how time flies ... I had better seize the moment with my kids."



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Sure, the driveway still looked like a yard sale after a wind storm and his children did not put their toys away. **Nothing changed except his interpretation of the facts.** He substituted gratitude for anger and changed his mind for good.

When you change the way you look at things, things change the way they look. Create your view inside-out by starting with your thoughts. Don't let your circumstances obstruct your view. When you choose your view, you will always have a clear line of sight to being your best.

2. Check Your Focus

The things we focus on create a magnet for our lives. Focus on opportunities, and doors seem to open. Focus on problems, and obstacles are plentiful.

Have you ever wondered why some people seem to have all the luck? Maybe you are one of the "lucky" ones. In general "lucky" people get the best of themselves and others by focusing on:

Forgiveness	vs.	Anger
Others	vs.	Self
Opportunities	vs.	Problems
Gratitude	vs.	Envy
Abundance	vs.	Scarcity
Today	vs.	Yesterday
Building up	vs.	Breaking down
Humor	vs.	Drama
Controllable things	vs.	Uncontrollable things
Giving	vs.	Taking

The more you focus on the "positive side of life," the more you will attract these things.

Focus on forgiveness and you will find the world forgiving. Focus on the comedy life offers and your life will be full of laughs. On the other hand, focus on the drama life offers and your life will be a soap opera.

The truth is that being "lucky" doesn't have much to do with luck at all. **The most successful people create their own luck by constantly checking their focus.** They appear lucky because their focus has put them in the right place to make good things happen. In other words, luck is 90 percent preparation and 10 percent opportunity.

Looking at how you spend your time, money and energy is a foolproof way to check your focus. **Time, money and energy are precious resources—your precious resources.** They are finite. When you spend them in one place you cannot spend them someplace else. To check your focus, look at how you spend your time, money and energy. Is it mostly on the right or left-hand column? Your answer will tell you if luck is in your future.

3. Control Your Inputs

Remember, your mind is your ultimate personal computer. Like your laptop at home, sometimes you might forget to turn on your mental virus protection program, allowing negative thoughts to invade your mind—without realizing it. So, the computer

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adage “Garbage in, garbage out” as it applies to your mind should really be “Garbage in, garbage stays.”

Your mind never sleeps. You can’t pull a “fast one” on it. **Whatever your mind hears from others, and especially from you, it records and stores.** The mind doesn’t discriminate between input that is good for you or harmful to you—it collects *all* input. If you hear something often enough, you will tend to believe it and act upon it. Your mind can be your greatest ally or worst enemy. Seek positive inputs and you will improve your chances of producing positive outputs.

We draw into our lives that which we constantly think about—good or bad. If you are obsessing about what your boss will do if you make a mistake, then guess what’s likely to happen? If you are always thinking about why you can’t seem to get a break, or when the next shoe will drop in your relationship, or what will happen if you can’t afford to pay for your car repairs or why you don’t get as much recognition as your colleague, then you are programming your mind (and those around you) to turn these thoughts into your reality. Negative thoughts are landmines along the pathway to being your best.

Consider three of the most common influences that can program us daily. They have the potential for a positive or negative impact on our thoughts and, ultimately, our results.

1. Television—Studies show that the subconscious mind is most receptive five minutes

before we doze off at night, a common time for watching the news. Unfortunately, much of the news today shows the worst side of people and the world. When you hear a news story, remind yourself that it’s considered news because it is *unusual*. Doing so will help you balance potentially negative input with more uplifting thoughts.

So how can you remain well-informed and maintain a positive outlook?

Monitor what you watch. Make the choice to watch programs that are more educational, artistic, spiritual or sports and comedy oriented. These types of programs stimulate positive thoughts.

2. Newspapers—Many people, particularly in the business world, start their day with the newspaper. Whether it’s a glimpse at the headlines or a front to back reading, there is plenty of positive and negative news to read. Before you dive into the daily newspaper or online news portal, take a quick inventory of all the things you have to be grateful for. Additionally, make it a habit to **finish your reading with an inspiring story** so your mind is primed for a positive day.

3. Other people—Make the choice to surround yourself with people who offer positive inputs. There will always be negative people and perspectives. Since we cannot hide from them, we must learn to filter out negative input to minimize “garbage” in our thoughts. The best strategy is to make a conscious effort to **get to know and spend time with people who have a positive outlook.**

The three sources of input listed above have the potential for a positive or negative impact on your attitude, and ultimately, your results. Take a look around you. You are what you think, so control your inputs!

Next time, we will discuss how to orchestrate your words.

But you don't have to wait to take a **FREE Attitude Tune-up!** A five minute investment will help you practice these instruments and more effectively orchestrate your attitude! Visit www.theLgroup.com. □

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