

SESSION 1. THE MAGIC WORD

Audio Transcript

This is Earl Nightingale with the new edition of *Lead the Field*. This program is about 12 ideas that will bring order and success into our lives. These ideas will work wonders, regardless of what we choose as the main thrust of our lives, for they are the great ideas that have evolved over the centuries, and together they form a constellation by which you and I can safely and successfully navigate.

The great Spanish philosopher, José Ortega y Gasset, reminded us that we human beings are born into a natural state of disorientation with our world. That is, while all other creatures are guided by instinct – of which they are unaware, and which they don't have the capacity to question – each of us, as a human creature, was given the godlike power to create his or her own life. And each of us does exactly that, all the years of his or her life. Every day, we put in place actions and ideas that will determine the shape and substance of our tomorrows. For some, those ideas and actions lead inevitably to extraordinary achievement and rewards. For most, they tend to lead to a kind of middle ground, in which great numbers of people take their cues from each other, without question or consideration. And for some, those actions and ideas lead to repeated frustration and problems, and they spend their lives in the bottom layers of the socioeconomic pyramid.

Success or failure as a human being is not a matter of luck, or circumstance, or fate, or the breaks, or who you know – or any of the other tiresome, old myths and clichés by which the ignorant tend to excuse themselves. It's a matter of following a commonsense paradigm of rules – guidelines anyone can follow.

Lead the Field has changed more lives, brought about more success stories, helped create more millionaires, and saved more careers, important jobs, and marriages than any other program ever produced. And the rules we talk about here don't change; they apply to any situation, under any and all circumstances. We never have to ask, "I wonder what will work in this particular situation?" All we have to do is make these ideas our own. And we begin with what I call "The Magic Word."

We all want good results from life, in our home, in our work, and in all our contacts with other people. The most important single factor that guarantees good results, day in, day out, all the months and years of our lives, is a healthy attitude! *Attitude* is the magic word.

Attitude is defined as "the position or bearing as indicating action, feeling, or mood." And it is our actions, feelings, or moods that determine the actions, feelings, or moods of others. Our attitude tells the world what we expect in return. If it's a cheerful, expectant attitude, it says to everyone with whom we come in contact that we expect the best in our dealings with our world.

You see, we tend to live up to our expectations. And others give to us, as far as their attitudes are concerned, what we expect. Our attitude is something we can control. We can establish our attitude each morning when we start our day – in fact, we do just that, whether or not we realize it. And the people in our family – all the people in our world – will reflect back to us the attitude we present to them.

It is, then, our attitude toward life that determines life's attitude toward us. Cause and effect. Everything we say or do will cause a corresponding effect. If we're cheerful, glad to be experiencing this miracle of life, others will reflect that good cheer back to us. We are the kind of people others enjoy being around.

You and I are responsible for our lives. You and I produce causes all day long, every day of our lives. The environment can return to us only a corresponding effect. That's why I say that each of us determines the quality of his or her own life. We get back what we put out.

Here's a way to evaluate the quality of your attitude in the past: Would you say that people tend to react to you in a smiling, positive manner, giving you friendly greetings when you appear? Your answer to that question will tell the story.

I remember the time when a man and his wife bought a home across the street from me in Florida. The couple had moved to Florida from their home in Minnesota. They had planned the move for years. They were tired of the Northern winters, and he was an avid fisherman.

Several months passed, and one day, I was surprised to see them packing. I walked across the street and asked the man if they were leaving so soon after they had made the move. He nodded. "My wife hates it here," he said. "We're going back home." I asked him how in the world his wife could hate it here, what she didn't like about the place. After a few questions, the truth came out.

"She hasn't been accepted here," he said. "The other women of the community have left her strictly alone. She hasn't made any friends. She hasn't been asked to participate in any of the community activities."

"Has she let the other women know she's interested in participating in community activities?" I asked him.

He stopped what he was doing and looked at me. "No," he said. "No, she hasn't. She's been waiting for the women to ask her."

"And since she's stayed in the house, waiting for them to come to her, they've thought of her as a recluse, as a person who's not interested in making friends. So they've left her alone."

There was a long silence, and then he began nodding. "Yes, that's exactly what's happened," he said.

Yes, the women of the neighborhood should have come to her and introduced themselves, or invited her to a tea or luncheon, but they were reacting to her. She didn't know that the community could give her back only a reflection of her own attitude. Here was a woman in her 60s who had never learned the first important rule for successful living: that our surroundings will always reflect us; that our environment is a mirror – often a merciless mirror – of ourselves.

As soon as a person begins to change, his or her surroundings will change. And it works like this: great attitude, great results; good attitude, good results; fair or average attitude, fair or average results; poor attitude, poor results.

So each of us shapes his or her own life. And to an altogether unexpected extent, the shape and texture and the quality or lack of quality of our lives is determined by our habitual attitude. It sounds simple, doesn't it? But it's not quite that easy. For most of us, learning this new habit takes time. But once it becomes a habit-knit part of our lives, our world will change as dramatically as it would if we were walking from a dark cave into the bright light of day.

Most people never think about their attitudes at all. For most of them, it's a matter of beginning each day in neutral. Their attitudes are neither good nor bad; they are poised to react to whatever stimuli they encounter. If the stimulus is good, they will reflect it; if it's bad, they will reflect that, too. They are chameleons, going through their days reacting to whatever confronts them. And these are the people of our environment. That's why it's so important for us to control our attitudes, to make sure they're excellent or good.

A person with a poor attitude toward learning, for example, isn't going to learn very much. I know you can think of examples of this in your own life. Or if we take the attitude that we can't do something, we generally will not do it. With an attitude of failure, we're whipped before we start.

It was William James of Harvard University, the father of psychology in America, who said "Human beings can alter their lives by altering their attitudes of mind."

In trying to describe the attitude that has worked so well for me over the years, I found myself using two important words: *gratitude* and *expectant*. First, I'm grateful for the opportunity to live on this beautiful and astonishing planet Earth. In the morning, I wake up with a sense of gratitude. Second, I expect the best; I expect to reach the goals I establish for myself (we'll talk a good deal more about this concept later in the program). I find the idea of fulfilling those goals agreeable; hence, the attitude of expectancy. I know the world will give me back what I put out in the way of attitude, so it's up to me. I'm responsible.

There are millions of human beings who live narrow, darkened, frustrated lives – who live defensively – simply because they take a defensive, doubtful attitude toward themselves and, as a result, toward life in general. A person with a poor attitude becomes a magnet for unpleasant experiences. When those experiences come – as they must, because of his attitude – they tend to reinforce his poor attitude, thereby bringing more problems, and so on. The person becomes an example of self-generating, doom-fulfilling prophecy. And it's all a matter – believe it or not – of attitude. We get what we expect. Our outlook on life is a kind of paintbrush, and with it, we paint our world. It can be bright and filled with hope and satisfaction, or it can be dark and gloomy – lugubrious.

Sometimes, it's hard to convince people that the world they experience is a reflection of their attitude. They take the attitude that if only people would be nice to them, they would be nice in return. They're like the person sitting in front of the cold stove waiting for the heat. Until he puts in the fuel, there won't be any heat. It's up to him to act first. It has to start somewhere. Let it begin with us.

Attitude is the reflection of the person inside. Consider for a moment the people who go sailing through life, from one success to another, and who, when they occasionally fail at something, shrug it off and head right out again.

No matter what people do, wherever you find people doing an outstanding job and getting outstanding results, you'll find people with a good attitude. These people take the attitude that they can accomplish what they set out to accomplish. They take the attitude that *achievement is the natural order of things* (and it is). They take the attitude that there's no good reason on earth why they can't be as successful, as competent, as anyone else. They have a healthy attitude toward life and the things they want to accomplish. Because of that, they can accomplish some remarkable things. Others may call them successful, outstanding, brilliant, lucky, and so on. Quite frequently, they are no smarter or more talented than most other people, but they have the right attitude. They find their accomplishments not too difficult simply because it seems so few others are really trying or really believe in themselves. As to luck, forget it. Luck is what happens when preparedness meets opportunity, and opportunity is there all the time.

A person can be very efficient at his or her work, but if the corresponding excellent attitude isn't present, the person is a failure. A robot can do a great job, but only a human being can ennoble work with a great attitude and, by so doing, touch it with the magic of humanness – make it come alive and sing, make it truly worthwhile. That, my friend, makes the difference.

Successful people come in all sizes, shapes, ages, and colors, and they have widely varying degrees of intelligence and education. But they have one thing in common: They expect more good out of life than bad. They expect success more often than failure. And they do succeed.

There are things you want – worthwhile things. Take the attitude that there are a lot more reasons why you can reach those goals than fail in the attempt. Go after them, work at it, keep your attitude positive, cheerful, and expectant, and you'll get them. And as you do, you'll grow to reach new plateaus and be able to accomplish still more.

Remember this: Our environment, the world in which we live and work, is a mirror of our attitudes and expectations. If we feel that our environment could stand some improvement, we can bring about that change for the better by improving our attitude. The world plays no favorites. It's impersonal. It doesn't care who succeeds or who fails. Nor does it care if we change. Our attitude toward life doesn't affect the world and the people in it nearly as much as it affects us.

It would be impossible to even estimate the number of jobs that have been lost, promotions or good grades missed, sales lost, or marriages ruined by poor attitudes. But you can number in the millions the jobs that are held but hated, the marriages that are tolerated but unhappy, the parents and children who fail to understand and love one another – all because of people who are waiting for the world and others to change them. They don't understand that what they're getting is a reflection of themselves. Nothing can change until we do. When we change, our worlds will change. The answer is attitude!

How does one develop a good attitude? The same way one develops any other ability: through practice! It's a good idea to stick on the bathroom mirror a small sign on which is printed the word

attitude! That way, you'll see it first thing every morning. You might have another sign in your car and one at your place of work. We need to smile more, speak to people, go out to people.

Everything in the world we want to do or get done, we must do with and through people. Every dollar we will ever earn must come from people. The person we love, and with whom we want to spend the rest of our life, is a human being with whom we must interact. Our children are individuals, each different from any other person who ever lived. And what affects them most is our attitude – the loving kindness they see and feel whenever we are around them.

If you'll begin to develop and maintain an attitude that says yes to life and the world, you'll be astonished at the changes you'll see.

Someone once said, "Life is dull only to dull people." It's true, of course. It's true also that life is interesting only to interesting people, and that life is successful only for successful people. We must be the epitome – the embodiment – of success. We must radiate success before it will come to us. We must first become mentally, from the attitude standpoint, the people we wish to become.

Many years ago, a newspaper reporter asked a famous Los Angeles restaurateur, "When did you become successful?"

He replied, "I was successful when I was dead broke. I knew what I wanted to do, and I knew I'd do it. It was only a matter of time."

He had a successful attitude long before the success he sought had become a reality.

The great German philosopher and writer, Goethe, put it this way: "Before you can do something, you must be something."

But let me prove my point by giving you an exercise. If you will conscientiously go about the exercise I will outline, and concentrate on it every day, you will find yourself becoming "lucky," as the uninitiated call it. All sorts of wonderful things will begin happening in your life, and it will show you what a great attitude can mean. So here's the exercise: Treat every person with whom you come in contact as the most important person on earth. Do that for three excellent reasons: (1) As far as every person is concerned, he is the most important person on earth. (2) That is the way human beings ought to treat each other. And (3) by treating everyone this way, we begin to form an important habit.

There's nothing in the world that men, women, and children want and need more than self-esteem — the feeling that they're important, that they're recognized, that they're needed, that they count and are respected. They will give their love, their respect, and their business to the person who fills this need.

Have you ever noticed that the higher you go in any organization of value, the nicer the people seem to be? It works this way: The bigger the people, the easier it is to talk to them, get along with them, and work with them. So they naturally matriculate to the top. It's their attitude. The people with great attitudes just naturally gravitate to the top of whatever business or department they're

in. They don't have great attitudes because of their positions; they have their positions largely because of their great attitudes.

For the purposes of this exercise, act toward others in exactly the same manner that you want them to act toward you. Treat the members of your family as the very important people they are, the most important in the world. Each morning, carry out into the world the kind of attitude you'd have if you were the most successful person on earth. Notice how quickly it develops into a habit. Almost immediately, you'll notice a change. Irritations that used to frustrate you will begin to disappear. When some less-informed person gives you a bad time, don't let his poor attitude infect yours. Keep yours in hand; keep it good; keep cool, above it all; and keep smiling. If you're driving and someone cuts in front of your car, or if someone is discourteous to you in any other manner, don't react as he would; smile it off.

Destructive emotions, such as anger, hatred, and jealousy don't hurt others; they hurt you. They can make your life miserable. They can make you sick. Forgive everyone who ever hurt you – really forgive them – and then forgive yourself. That's all past. Stewing over it, exhuming it, can only make you sick. Forgive and forget. Get rid of it. You've risen above that sort of thing.

As you develop a great attitude, you'll probably realize that you've already placed yourself on the road to what you seek. You are well on your way. It makes no difference how successful you may have been in the past. You'll be delighted with the ease and comfort of your new life.

The bad or poor attitudes of others can be as infectious as the common cold. It's important that we look on them in this light: as infectious conditions that can end up only hurting and annoying us if we allow ourselves to catch them. Like the doctor who often treats people with infectious conditions, we must keep ourselves healthy. We simply can't take time for that sort of thing.

Whoever coined the cliché "Life's too short" certainly knew what he was talking about. It really is too short – much too short – to spend any of our valuable time mimicking the attitudes of others – unless their attitudes are good. A great attitude does much more than turn on the lights in our worlds; it seems to magically connect us to all sorts of serendipitous opportunities that were somehow absent before the change. Maybe that's what people mean when they say we're lucky. Suddenly, we do find ourselves getting the so-called "breaks." But it's really nothing more than this new connection to the world that comes with a great attitude. We find ourselves doing more and doing it in less time. We put ourselves directly in the path of all kinds of serendipitous happenings.

When you begin to develop a better attitude, you should realize that you've already placed yourself among the top 5 percent of the people – among the most successful people on earth. You've placed yourself on the road to what you seek. You've prepared the ground; you've only to plant the seed.

Now, in summing up, here are a few points to keep in mind:

First, it's our attitude at the beginning of a difficult task which, more than anything else, will bring about its successful outcome.

Secondly, our attitudes toward others determine their attitudes toward us. We're all interdependent. The success we achieve in life will depend largely on how well we relate to others.

Thirdly, before you can achieve the kind of life you want, you must think, act, talk, and conduct yourself in all of your affairs as would the person you wish to become. Keep a mental picture of that person before you as often as you can during the day.

Fourthly, remember that the higher you go in any organization of value, the better the attitudes you'll find. And that great attitudes are not the result of success; success is the result of great attitudes.

Finally, the deepest craving of the human being is for recognition and self-esteem – to be needed, to feel important, to be recognized and appreciated. That includes our loved ones and everyone else with whom we come in contact during our days.

To make these important principles a habit-knit part of your life, here are some suggestions:

Since your mind can hold only one thought at a time, make each thought you hold constructive and positive. Look for the best in people and ideas. Be constantly alert for new ideas you can put to use in your life.

Don't waste time talking about your problems with people who can't solve them, or about your health unless it's good or you're talking to your doctor. It won't help you. It can't help others.

Radiate the attitude of well-being and confidence, the attitude of the person who knows where he or she is going. You'll find all sorts of good things happening to you.

Lastly, treat everyone with whom you come in contact as the most important person on earth. Start this habit, practice it consistently, and you'll do it – and benefit from it – for the rest of your life.

Thank you.

Exercises — Write your answers in the space provided below.

1. Evaluate your attitude toward yourself and others, toward success and your career, and toward life in general.

2. Outline ways in which your attitude toward your family could be improved.

3. Outline ways in which your attitude toward coworkers and others with whom you frequently come in contact could be improved.

4. List other attitude-improvement goals.