

On Human Attitudes



A positive attitude may not solve all your problems, but it will annoy enough people to make it worth the effort.

—*Herm Albright*¹

To err is human, to forgive divine.

—*Alexander Pope*, 1711²

To err is human; to forgive, infrequent.

—*Franklin P. Adams*, 1946

Injuries may be forgiven, but not forgotten.

—*Aesop*³

I never forgive, but I always forget.

—*Arthur Balfour*⁴

Do not dig a hole for another one to fall into, you may end up in it yourself.

—*Russian proverb*

Revenge [is] the sweetest morsel to the mouth, that ever was cooked in hell!

—*Walter Scott*, 1818

Living well is the best revenge.

—*George Herbert*, 1640⁵

¹As quoted, without a date, in several generally reliable collections, starting not later than 2005.

²This is an extension of one of Plutarch's venerable "morals", which was later (in 1386) twisted along a different line by Geoffrey Chaucer - and certainly many others.

³Included, without a date, in all major publications of Aesop's *Fables*.

⁴As quoted, without a date, by R. Blake in 1970.

⁵This is a succinct version of an earlier (circa 1580) aphorism by John Lyly.

There is no revenge so complete as forgiveness.

—*Josh Billings*, 1873

Tact is the knack of making a point without making an enemy.

—*Howard W. Newton*⁶

In the end, we will remember not the words of our enemies, but the silence of our friends.

—*Martin Luther King Jr.*, 1957

Never explain—your friends do not need it, and your enemies will not believe you anyway.

—*Elbert Hubbard*, 1907

Thank Lord, my dear, that we have enemies,
This means that probably we have friends as well.

—*Yuri Vizbor*, 1973⁷

Defend me from my friends; I can defend myself from my enemies.

—*Jean Hérault Gourville*, 1724

To find a friend one must close one eye. To keep him—two.

—*Norman Douglas*, 1941

I know that there are people who do not love their fellow man, and I hate people like that!

—*Tom Lehrer*, 1965

There are some people who can receive a truth by no other way than to have their understanding shocked and insulted.

—*Carl Sandburg*, 1904

Never offend people with style when you can offend them with substance.

—*Sam Brown*, 1997

Resentment [...] is like drinking poison and waiting for the other person to die.

—*Carrie Fisher*, 2004

Holding anger is a poison. It eats you from the inside.

—*Mitch Albom*, 2003

⁶As quoted, without a date, in several reliable collections, starting not later than 1946; sometimes misattributed to Sir Isaac Newton.

⁷This is a prosaic translation of a verse from a popular Russian song..

Never go to bed mad. Stay up and fight!

—*Phyllis Diller*, 1966⁸

In anger we should refrain both from speech and action.

—*Pythagoras*⁹

Where we have strong emotions, we're liable to fool ourselves.

—*Carl Sagan*, 1980

Intolerance is evidence of impotence.

—*Aleister Crowley*, 1929

Fervor is the weapon of choice for the impotent.

—*Frantz Fanon*, 1952

Rudeness is the weak man's imitation of strength.

—*Eric Hoffer*, 1955

Truth often suffers more by the heat of its defenders, than from the arguments of its opposers.

—*William Penn*, 1682

A man must be orthodox upon most things, or he will never even have time to preach his own heresy.

—*G. K. Chesterton*, 1909

It takes too much energy to be against something unless it's really important.

—*Madeleine L'Engle*, 2004

What's the sense of wrestling with a pig? You both get all over muddy ... and the pig likes it.

—*Cyrus S. Ching*, 1948¹⁰

If you are arguing with an idiot, he is probably doing the same.

—*Mikhail Zhvanetsky*, 2010

Never answer a critic, unless he's right.

—*Bernard Baruch*, 1983

⁸Sometimes misattributed to William Congreve.

⁹As quoted, without a date, by Diogenes Laërtius in the third century AD.

¹⁰As quoted in a newspaper of that time; frequently misattributed to George Bernard Shaw.

We judge ourselves by what we feel capable of doing, while others judge us by what we have already done.

—*Henry Wadsworth Longfellow*, 1849

Whenever I dwell for any length of time on my own shortcomings, they gradually begin to seem mild, harmless, rather engaging little things, not at all like the glaring defects in other people's characters.

—*Margaret Halsey*, 1938

The people who are late are often so much jollier than the people who have to wait for them.

—*E. V. Lucas*, 1926

There are two types of people—those who come into a room and say, 'Well, here I am!' and those who come in and say, 'Ah, there you are.'

—*Frederick Lewis Collins*¹¹

What the world needs is more geniuses with humility; there are so few of us left.

—*Oscar Levant*¹²

Humility is the solid foundation of all the virtues.

—*Confucius*, fifth century BC¹³

Humility is a virtue all preach, none practice, and yet everybody is content to hear.

—*John Selden*, 1786

People with humility don't think less of themselves, they just think of themselves less.

—*Ken Blanchard and Norman Vincent Peale*, 1996

Humility is a virtue when you have no other.

—*Edward Abbey*, 1990

Many a man is praised for his reserve and so-called shyness when he is simply too proud to risk making a fool of himself.

—*J. B. Priestley*, 1956

The man with a plan is king. [...] A man without a plan is just a pawn to circumstance.

—*Wheeler L. Baker*, 1993

¹¹Some sources attribute this observation to engineer Archie Frederick Collins, who lived at about the same time, but for me this looks very unlikely.

¹²As quoted, without a date, by Gene Perret in 1995.

¹³Possibly based on a line from the Hebrew *Books of Kings*, whose first written version was already available at Confucius' time.

If you don't have a plan for yourself, you'll be a part of someone else's.

—Anonymous¹⁴

Adventure is just bad planning.

—Roald Amundsen¹⁵

Plans are useless, but planning is indispensable.

—Dwight Eisenhower, 1962

I rarely plan my research; it plans me.

—Max Perutz, 1998

Man proposes and God disposes.

—European proverb

The absence of alternatives clears the mind marvelously.

—Henry Kissinger, 1978

Courage is the art of being the only one who knows you're scared to death.

—Harold Wilson, 1977

Courage is doing what you're afraid to do. There can be no courage unless you're scared.

—Eddie Rickenbacker, 1977

Many would be cowards if they had courage enough.

—Thomas Fuller, 1732

Each of us bears his own Hell.

—Virgil¹⁶

Most powerful is he who has himself in his own power.

—Seneca, ~64 AD

To be strong, conquer yourself.

—German proverb

Nothing can bring you peace but yourself.

—Ralph Waldo Emerson, 1841

¹⁴I have seen this quote attributed to Emanuel James “Jim” Rohn (1930-2009), and also used, slightly paraphrased, in a 1996 book by some John Mason, but could not find a reliable confirmation of either authorship.

¹⁵As quoted, without a date, in several reputable sources, including *Wikiquote*.

¹⁶From his *Aeneid*, written in 29–19 BC.

Nothing can contribute more to peace of soul than the lack of any opinion whatsoever.

—*Georg Christoph Lichtenberg*¹⁷

We immediately become more effective when we decide to change ourselves rather than asking things to change for us.

—*Stephen Covey*, 1989

Don't go around saying the world owes you a living. The world owes you nothing. It was here first.

—*Robert Jones Burdette*, 1905¹⁸

What you're supposed to do when you don't like a thing is change it. If you can't change it, change the way you think about it. Don't complain.

—*Maya Angelou*, 2013

I can't complain, but sometimes I still do.

—*Joe Walsh*, 1978

I will hear not those who weep and complain, for their disease is contagious.

—*Og Mandino*, 1968

Never complain. Complaints will always discredit you.

—*Baltasar Gracián*, 1647

Never complain and never explain.

—*Stanley Baldwin*, 1943¹⁹

Nobody got anywhere in the world by simply being content.

—*Louis L'Amour*, 1979

Discontent is the wheel that moves people forward.

—*Lu Xun*²⁰

Restlessness is discontent —and discontent is the first necessity of progress. Show me a thoroughly satisfied man and I will show you a failure.

—*Thomas Edison*, 1948

To be pleased with one's limits is a wretched state.

—*Johann Wolfgang von Goethe*, 1833

¹⁷From his *Notebook E* (1775-1776).

¹⁸Frequently misattributed to Mark Twain.

¹⁹This maxim is sometimes attributed to Benjamin Disraeli (S. Baldwin's predecessor as a UK prime minister), but I could not find a reliable confirmation of that authorship.

²⁰As quoted, without a date, in many collections.

Hungry fighters win fights.

—*Norman Mailer*, 1960

Normal is the wrong name often used for the average.

—*Henry S. Haskins*, 1940

Normal is getting dressed in clothes that you buy for work and driving through traffic in a car that you are still paying for—in order to get to the job you need to pay for the clothes and the car, and the house you leave vacant all day so you can afford to live in it.

—*Ellen Goodman*²¹

The trouble with normal is it always gets worse.

—*Bruce Cockburn*, 1983

Normal is not something to aspire to, it's something to get away from.

—*Jodie Foster*, 2004

Men who never get carried away should be.

—*Malcolm Forbes*, 1979

Anxiety is the dizziness of freedom.

—*Søren Kierkegaard*, 1844

If everything seems under control, you're not going fast enough.

—*Mario Andretti*²²

²¹As quoted, without a date, in several generally reliable collections, including *Wikiquote*.

²²He is a famous race car driver.