

What Your Circumstances Shouldn't Do

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Have you ever thought about how much your attitude depends on your circumstances? For example, does your happiness depend on how much praise you receive? How much money you have? How organized and controlled things are? How well your children are doing? Or do you stay upbeat regardless of your situation?

How about your character? Does the degree to which you are completely honest depend on your situation? Do your personal ethics depend on how much of your own money is at risk? Is doing the right thing for your company, customers, or employees negotiable? Is being respectful of others dependent on how well they treat you? Will you stand up for others regardless of how it impacts

you? Will you help a colleague who is struggling even if no one else knows and you don't get any credit for it?

How about your spiritual beliefs? Does your faith depend on your health and well-being? What about your family—do you love them unconditionally? Or does your love depend on what they do for you? Do you treat people with the highest level of respect regardless of how respectful they are to you? Do you care for your spouse regardless of how your spouse cares for you? Do you lose your composure and become defensive or retaliate when you feel attacked? Or do you maintain a calm respectful demeanor regardless of what your spouse or anyone else might say to you?

These questions are intended to make you think about one thing – how much of you is really you versus your circumstances? What is the basis for your attitude, character, and concern for others? Is it dependent on others and circumstances or is it truly who you are? Do you take the high road of honorable character when it is convenient and easy, or all the time?

Of course favorable circumstances make being calm, considerate, positive, and honest easier, but circumstances are not good excuses for compromising your integrity and values. There are many people who contend with extreme adversity, yet maintain their poise. There are people with little to be thankful for, yet are thankful. There are people who keep a positive outlook simply because they choose not to dwell on what they don't have. Many people don't put conditions on their self-worth, character, and attitude.

Who you are, how you think, and how you act is a choice. You choose your attitude, character, and reactions. If you choose to take the high road and uphold honorable values despite your situation, good job! Your noble character is truly who you are. You undoubtedly set the example for others to follow. You are a person of integrity and strong moral values. You are positive and happy. You are someone people respect and love to be around, especially in the midst of adversity.

If, however, your mood, character, and respect for others is conditional, realize that you will constantly rise and fall on an emotional roller coaster. If you depend on how others treat you for your mood, you will be happy or sad depending on how happy or sad they are. You will fluctuate between feeling secure and insecure depending on how much money you have in the bank. You will feel competent or incompetent based on how much praise people give you. You will feel confident or fearful depending on how much stability versus change you encounter.



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Don't outsource yourself to the whims of your circumstances. Don't let your circumstances prevent you from being who you are. You may need to make changes to improve your circumstances, but realize that when your feelings, thoughts, words, and actions follow you wherever you go that your circumstances are not to blame.

Consider that you are the determining factor in how happy, considerate, calm, and likable you are. You control what you think and do. You are the reason you like or dislike your job. You are the reason you get along or don't get along with your colleagues. You are the reason you are happy or sad. You are the one that makes the choice to be honest, kind, and positive. You control whether you are compassionate or insensitive to others despite what they do.

You can have whatever mindset you want regardless of your circumstances. As the Holocaust survivor Viktor Frankl said, "The last of human freedoms is the ability to choose one's attitude in a given set of circumstances."

Choose your outlook and attitude. Intercept your feelings before they take over. Use temptations as triggers to choose the high road of honorable character. Let your emotions be tools instead of shortcomings. Define your values and stick by them regardless of other's opinions or gossip. Don't lower yourself into the discord, negativity, and selfishness that is so prevalent. Be a leader and set the example for others to follow. Use your smile—it is right under your nose. End every day feeling good that you followed your core values and made a positive difference in the circumstances of others.

Article written by Mike Hawkins, award-winning author of *Activating Your Ambition: A Guide to Coaching the Best Out of Yourself and Others* (www.ActivatingYourAmbition.com), author of the *SCOPE of Leadership* six-book series on coaching leaders to lead as coaches (www.ScopeOfLeadership.com), and president of Alpine Link Corp (www.AlpineLink.com), a boutique consulting firm specializing in leadership development and sales performance improvement.

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