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**A Brief Look at Attitudes–Based Learning (ABL)**

**By Dr. Alvin Chan Kok Chuen**

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The greatest discovery of my generation (about 1900) is that human beings can alter their lives by altering their attitudes of mind.

William James

'Sow a thought, reap an action.  
Sow an action, reap a habit.  
Sow a habit, reap a character.  
Sow a character, reap a destiny.'

Attitudes–Based Learning (or ABL, for short) is a program initiated in the year 2000 to inculcate positive attitudes and characters in children and teens in Singapore.

During that period of time, there were many incidents around the world that deserved our utmost attention. The rise of terrorism around the world was televised around the world and the increasing number of children and teens suffering due to drugs, physical and sexual abuse was alarming. The increase in school–related violence and incidents were reported widely, from America to Japan. Not to mention, several incidents involving teens going on a school killing spree in America.

One of the most bizarre incidents involved a seven–year–old boy who pulled out a gun and shot dead a girl in class (in front of his Grade 1 teacher and classmates near Flint, Michigan). Associated Press, Mar 1, 2000

With so much violence and terror in our world involving children (directly or indirectly), there was a pressing need to encourage more character building education in our societies, to bring forth positive attitudes and moral values for our young.

Hence, the development of the program, Attitudes–Based Learning (ABL) was given birth in Singapore to play a positive role in remedying the ills of our society.

## A Brief Look at Attitudes–Based Learning (ABL)

In its infancy, ABL was perceived as a credible cornerstone to foster a conscious character building education in Singapore schools. But unfortunately, there was not much done to push the idea forward due to lack of interest and financial backing in year 2000. Though for a brief period, ABL made its print debut in the first Asia's children's creative thinking magazine, ONE, in Singapore and Malaysia through stories that emphasized positive attitudes like kindness, determination and how one can make a difference in people's lives.

It was only until the year 2003 that ABL was resuscitated into its full glory and intentions. With encouragement and involvement of like–minded individuals who were fervent to build a mentally and emotionally stronger Singapore, ABL was re–engineered to serve as a holistic attitudes– transformation education program for all (though emphasis is still on young children and teens).

In the year 2003, the new and improved Attitudes–Based Learning program is not just another character building program. ABL was further dissected and analyzed by a small team of researchers. With added refinements to the teaching philosophy and methodology, ABL program became more adaptive and holistic. This has greatly increased the effectiveness of achieving the mission and the desired outcomes of the ABL program.

It was also realized that ABL should cater for pre–schoolers, as there was insufficient providers of character building education programs for this particular age group in Singapore and Asia. With ABL being a program that infuses the dimension of self–reflection to build better self–esteem and awareness, we were confident that through interesting and thought–provoking activities (based on Harvard's Professor Howard Gardner's Multiple Intelligences concept), ABL would be immensely successful in encouraging positive attitudes amongst our pre–schoolers.

So, how is ABL unique from other character building education programs available?

- ABL adopts a 7–steps framework, which ensure that each child is correctly exposed, explained and experienced to the right attitude

- ABL emphasis is on self–discovery rather than forced inculcation

- ABL uses 4 easy–to–remember animal characters to help each child relate a specially devised set of values and attitudes.

The process of nurturing positive attitudes in your students using Attitudes–Based Learning program is not complex. They are simple but effective steps to ensure that your students will slowly but steadily transform the way they behave and feel about themselves. More importantly, family and friends will notice the difference in them in the most positive manner if done right.

The 7–Steps of the Attitudes–Based Learning Process developed by Dr. Alvin Chan

There is a sequence of 7–steps that you need to follow in order for ABL to be effective in achieving your desired outcomes.

## A Brief Look at Attitudes–Based Learning (ABL)

### 1. EXPLANATION AND UNDERSTANDING

I. Explain the attitude to be taught to your charges

II. Increase their understanding by giving a few examples about the attitude. Better still, tell a story with the related attitude to be taught and discuss with them

III. Ask them whether they have experiences about the attitude taught to check on their understanding.

### 2. SHARING EXPERIENCES

I. Get them to share their experiences about the attitude and the related positive behavior

### 3. SITUATIONS and REFLECTIONS

I. Give them a few situations whereby such attitude can be applied in their lives

II. Ask them what they will do in this variety of situations

III. Get them to reflect upon their actions—are they appropriate or not?

IV. Share your thoughts with them about their actions

V. Tell them what you think is the more appropriate action for each situation

VI. Ask them to reflect on what you have told them—do they agree with you?

### 4. ROLE–PLAY

I. Create an environment for them to role–play the few situations that are being discussed.

II. Ask them to point out whether the `actors' have acted in an appropriate manner.

### 5. ACTIVITY (TO REMIND AND REINFORCE THE LEARNING)

I. Give them an activity (could be listening to a story, drawing or singing a song) to reinforce what they have learnt about the attitude. This is to help them remember better the attitude learnt in class.

II. Encourage them to `practice' what they have learnt in class by giving specific situations and appropriate actions they can do in their home, with their family and friends.

### 6. ACCOUNTABILITY

I. Get them to be accountable for practicing what they have learnt by providing them a checklist of positive actions (usually using pictures to show) for them to remind themselves (or even for their parents to sign the checklist)

II. After a few days, ask them whether they have practiced the positive actions based on the checklist that were given in class.

### 7. EVALUATION

I. Teacher must periodically keep track that students continue to practice the positive actions taught to ensure internalization of attitudes.

II. The checklist also acts as a measurement to evaluate the effectiveness of the learning process.

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## **Change Your Attitude, Change Your Life**

**By Mike Moore**

If we are the products of our attitudes then it is important for us to examine our attitudes, both positive and negative, to discover the impact they are having on our lives. This is even more important if we are determined to maximize the potential that is ours, a potential which, in the vast majority of us, remains grossly underdeveloped.

Positive attitudes release a power to achieve that will astound you, while negative attitudes severely hamper our becoming the people we are capable of becoming. It become the central task of anyone interested in actualizing their enormous potential to become involved in the process of attitudinal transformation.

Attitudinal transformation takes time, effort and determination but it can be done. Don't expect perfection, just progress. It took a long time to develop negative attitudes and it will take time to transform them. It is also important not to concentrate on more than one or two negative attitudes at once. If you overload your agenda for change you run the risk of becoming discouraged and giving up.

Once you have identified the negative attitude you wish to transform, commit yourself to the process of becoming conscious of that attitude cropping up throughout the day. You will be surprised at how quickly you will become aware of your target attitude. When you are focussed on the attitude, visualize it leaving your body and flying off into the great beyond. Now replace it with a positive attitude and give yourself the suggestion that from now on this will be your dominant thought pattern. Whenever your old negative attitude creeps back into your mind engage this process of thought replacement. Soon the new attitude will become dominant and you will find yourself enjoying its positive power in your life.

Be gentle with yourself when you fall back into the old pattern of thinking. Believe that the change you desire will come more frequently and it will. It might help to remember that human beings use between 2 and ten percent of their mind's potential so you have a huge reservoir of unused potential to help you over any periods of discouragement.

Don't forget to continue to use humour to keep your spirits up and put the entire process in perspective. HUMOUR MAKES GOOD THINGS HAPPEN.

This is an excerpt from Mike Moore's book EMBRACING THE MYSTERY

## A Brief Look at Attitudes–Based Learning (ABL)

Mike Moore is an international speaker on humor and human potential

Change Your Attitude, Change Your Life

Attitudes Training Will Increase Productivity In Your Company And Home Based Business!

How To Maximize Your Downtime

Feelings and Attitudes

Ingredients for success

How to play a Guitar

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The Alphabet of Birds

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