

Happy in 30

By Randy Thurman, CPA/PFS, CFP®

A young man we'll call Brad works for a local sandwich shop. For years, I ordered a club sandwich from him and generally found him to be in a good mood. Because a sub store went in close to my place of business, I had not seen Brad for a few years. One day, I found myself in his neighborhood, so I ordered my usual. Brad was still working there and remembered me. More than that, he told me that I had made a big difference in his life with an unforgettable lesson on attitude.

The episode he was referring to had happened years earlier when, before placing my order, I asked Brad how his day was going. After assuring him that I was sincerely interested, Brad fully conveyed just how badly his day was going. He accentuated his story with some pretty daunting curse words.

After listening for a bit, I asked him if he would like to earn an easy \$20 tip? All he had to do was act with great enthusiasm for thirty minutes. Note that he didn't have to *feel* enthusiastic, he only had to *act* like it. That meant treating every customer with a welcoming attitude and excitement over their patronage. It also meant treating his co-workers with genuine respect, helping them out at every opportunity, and offering encouraging compliments whenever he noticed that they were doing something well.

Brad accepted my offer and I gave him the money on the spot, indicating my confidence in his ability to meet the challenge. When I returned later, Brad was smiling. When I asked a co-worker about his performance, she said, "Unbelievably well!"

Then, Brad told me something that took me by surprise. He said "That was amazing. I changed my day in thirty minutes. Do you want your \$20 back?" I told him to keep the money, but remember the experience. He did and it not only changed his day, but his approach to life.

Everyone has difficult days. When you're having one of those, try acting with enthusiasm for at least thirty minutes. More often than not, you'll be happier – and so will those around you.

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