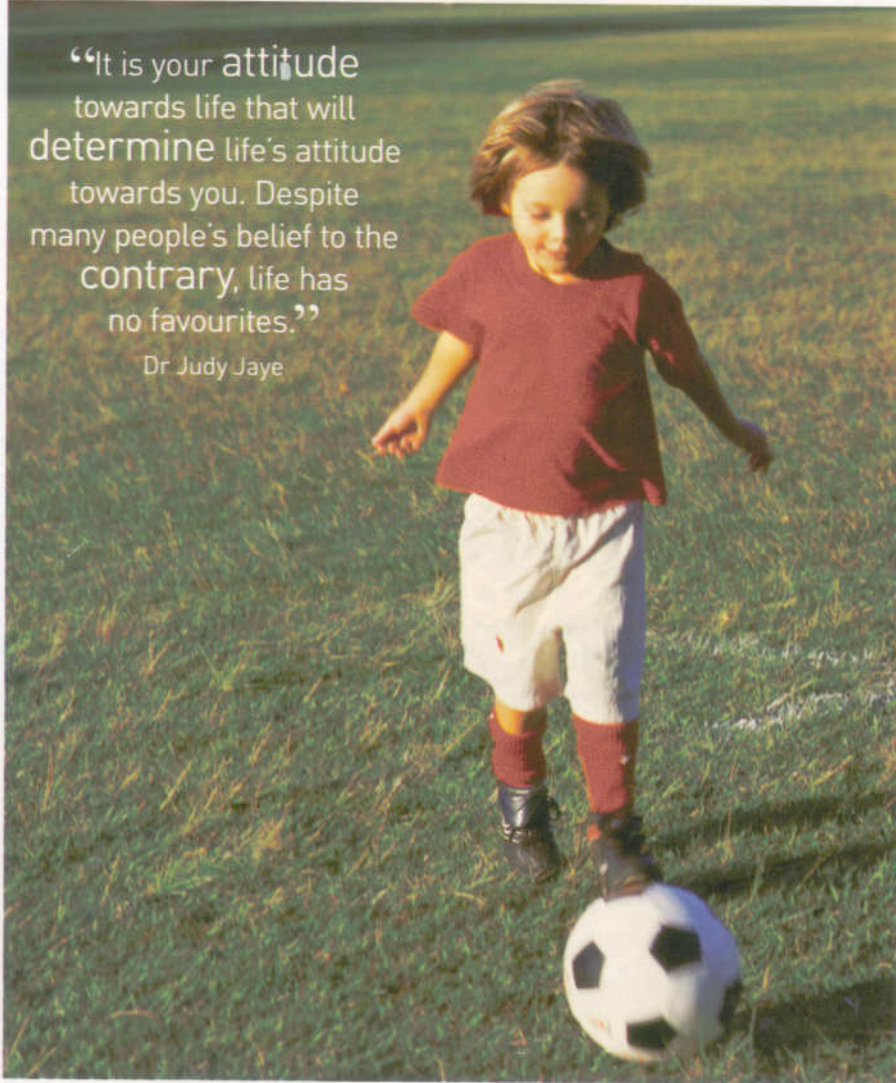


“It is your attitude towards life that will determine life’s attitude towards you. Despite many people’s belief to the contrary, life has no favourites.”

Dr Judy Jaye



Bust stress

According to Dr Judy Jaye, project development manager at The Stress Clinic, there are three basic principles for managing stress:

1 The knowledge that stress lies not in the situation itself but in your perception or interpretation of the situation. “In other words, people then have the ability to know that if they perceive it in a different way, they can manage it. This is so important, as you need to know that painful circumstances are unavoidable, but suffering is optional,” explains Judy.

2 As a mother, things may appear to be out of control on the outside, but if you just reframe the situation from an obstacle into a challenge, or get it down to ‘I can actually cope with it’ – it will be within your control.

3 You choose your own reaction or response to stress. We can either respond in an angry manner, or we can respond in a passive manner through our behaviour to give up, or we can respond in an assertive manner. For example, you can say: “Right, even though you may be shouting and screaming at me, I don’t need to shout and scream back at you. I don’t need to throw a tantrum.”

There are also two types of responses to stress. The first is the proactive – when you choose your own response. “It is very important to know that you have the power to choose your own response, with the result that you can empower yourself. Always bear in mind that you control your own thoughts,” says Judy. The second type of response is the reactive – where everything is out

of control and we tend to mirror negative behaviour. With children it is very important that they don’t see their parents mirroring their shouting and screaming tantrums. If you mirror a negative response, all that it is going to do is build up a further negative response, and the circle will just spiral.

The best approach to a stressful situation is to stay calm, stay assertive and stay steady. If you are going to talk assertively, you need to be confident and aim for a win-win situation. Here, the use of positive self talk such as: “This too shall pass; I have got through a difficult situation before in my life; I can get through this,” will help. Acknowledge that you have the tenacity to withstand this by using control. Tell yourself that you are an outstanding mother, you are an excellent entertainer, you are a wonderful wife, you are a great friend, you are a loyal worker, and you will have a positive control over your life. Build that positivity, recognise your efforts and be your own cheerleader.

In balancing your work, happy home and personal life, it is also vital to be organised and start the day out right. “Take your clothes out the night before, prepare the sandwiches the night before, make sure that when you wake up things are as in control as possible,” advises Judy. By telling yourself that it is going to be a wonderful day, you are setting yourself up for success. Conversely, if you make up your mind that something is going to go wrong, it will.

The important thing to realise is that for every action there is a reaction and that the choice is yours. Most importantly, you have control over your thoughts. You choose where to eat and what to do. You can choose to have fun with your kids by going to a movie or by going ice-skating. You are the one who can choose to spend money on chocolates or grab a piece of fruit instead. Ultimately, you are the adult and your children will learn from you. There is no doubt that it is difficult to be a career woman and a ‘supermom’ at the same time, but if you start encouraging a healthy lifestyle for your family now, in the long run it will pay dividends both ways.