

The 7 Habits of Highly Effective Holidays

This article is adapted from the original written by Randy Lisk in December 2008. I hope you enjoy this year's version of The 7 Habits of Highly Effective Holidays.

History Lesson

This year marks the end of our 27th year in business. Did you know Lisk Associates originated because of Stephen Covey's 7 Habits of Highly Effective People? My dad (Randy Lisk) was an engineer at IBM for 20+ years in Lexington, Kentucky. In 1991, IBM was bought by a company called Lexmark which manufactured computer printers. As part of his buyout, he was asked to establish a business and become the facilitator for this new workshop. Every new Lexmark employee had to attend the 7 Habits of Highly Effective People workshop. At the time, Lexmark had 10,000+ employees and Lisk Associates was born.

We don't offer that workshop anymore, but the principles still apply, especially during the holidays. With credit to Dr. Stephen Covey and Randy Lisk, here are the 7 habits for highly effective holidays.

Habit #1: Be Proactive: The habit of personal choice.

Being proactive means that no matter what circumstances we face (and many are facing tough times right now) we still have the power to choose our own response to those circumstances. We can be thankful for what we have vs. what we don't have or what we have lost. Reactive people tend to focus on what's being done to them; proactive people focus on their options, freedoms, and possibilities. Thought-starter: Where are you focusing your energy this year?

Habit #2: Begin With The End In Mind: The habit of goal setting, planning, and visualization.

You can only predict your future, when you have first visualized it in your mind. Once you have visualized it, be proactive and write down your goals. Thought-starter: Picture this: It's January 2, 2019 and you just had your best holiday ever...what happened? (I bet you just smiled)

Habit #3: Put First Things First: The habit of time management and self-management.

Dr. Covey said, "Do not get caught in the thick of thin things." Make time to be fully "present" during the holidays. Thought-starter: Consider your current roles: What could you do over the holidays to be the best you for those other people in your life?

Habit #4: Think Win-Win – The habit of cooperation.

Help others: family, friends, colleagues, even strangers. The rush of the holidays is stressful, and if you're feeling a little down, go help somebody else out. Thought-starter: Who would you be willing to help before the holidays are over?

Habit #5: Seek First To Understand, Then Be Understood – The habit of communication.

You can't understand somebody else without listening to them and asking good questions. Listening to understand vs. "fixing them" or "straightening something out" helps you know what's important to the other person. And, they will most likely appreciate you asking them one more question vs. just telling them what to do or giving them advice...don't worry, you'll still have time to get your two cents in. Thought-starter: This may sound weird, but take time to listen to someone you know well as if you were listening to a stranger and ask that one extra question. How did that feel?

Habit #6: Synergize – The habit of creating.

The concept of synergy says the whole is more than the sum of its parts. Holiday choirs, and decorated streets are a couple holiday examples. 'Tis the season of magic. As we get older, some of our belief in the magic of this season may fade. Thought-starter: If you're "belief-o-meter" is running low, go find a kid under the age of 10 and start with the question of..."What are you looking forward to this holiday?" Try following their answer with..."And what else?" (What a great opportunity to practice habit #5).

Habit #7: Sharpen The Saw – The habit of renewal.

Dr. Covey suggested, "Spend one hour per day in the private victory." His private victory meant a person's physical, mental, social, and spiritual self. You can only go 24-7 so long without feeling "out of balance". Thought-starter: What are you willing to do the last 10 days of this year to sharpen your saw for one hour per day?

I wish you all a happy holiday season filled with wonder, awe, magic, and good times. I look forward with hope to a prosperous new year for all of us.