



# 8 Habits of Highly Effective Leaders

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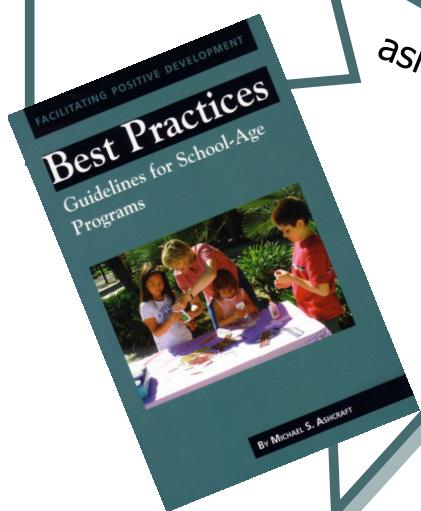


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# 8 Habits of Highly-Effective Afterschool Leaders

## Habit #1 is Safety. Because... Safety First!

*Know safety - No injury. No Safety - Know Injury. – unknown*

*Out of this nettle, danger, we pluck this flower, safety. ~William Shakespeare*

*"Safety First" is "Safety Always." ~Charles M. Hayes*

It is kind of like Abraham Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs. At the bottom of the pyramid are the basic needs – food, water, security, and SAFETY. These needs must be met first in order to address the more psychological needs of esteem, belonging, and love.

Highly-effective afterschool leaders keep kids and each other safe – physically safe and emotionally safe.

Leaders ensure there are NO safety or health hazards in the area. They protect kids from even potential hazards like caustic art materials, cleaning agents, medications, sharp knives, hot liquids, etc. They check equipment for active play, and make sure it is safe.

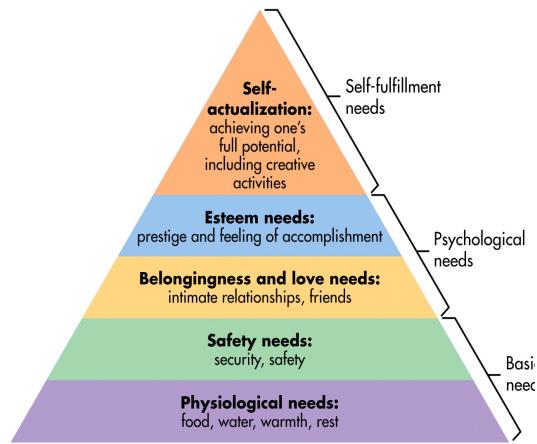
Afterschool leaders ensure the program community works together to keep the facilities clean. They make sure there are adequate hand-washing facilities and supplies and that we ALL wash our hands frequently.

Leaders create or maintain systems that are in place to protect the children from harm, when they move from one place to another or use the rest room - systems to keep unauthorized people from taking children from the program.

Afterschool leaders carefully supervise children according to their level of responsibility. They note when children arrive, when they leave, and with whom they leave. They know where the children are and what they are doing at all times. And they increase the level of supervision even more when they are engaged in higher risk activities.

### Highly-effective leaders provide appropriate supervision to keep kids safe.

1. In the upper left hand corner you see a camera. The camera means FOCUS. **FOCUS** your attention on the behavior of the children when you are with a group. Do not let outside distractions take your focus off of the children.
2. The clock reads six o'clock because that is when we close. The clock means wait until after closing time to talk about things that are strictly personal in nature. **TALK LATER**. Talk about the kids and how the program is running during business hours, but talk about your weekend plans or your love life later – after six o'clock.
3. The group of people with the arrow means **SPREAD OUT** – as opposed to “grouping up.” When there's more than one staff person in an area, spread out so that you can supervise the entire activity area well. Whether it is on the playground, in the cafeteria, on a field trip, or on a bus... don't group up – spread out.



4. The eye in profile is the all-seeing eye. It means **SEE EVERYONE**. It means orient your body so that you can see the action. Position yourself in a way that allows you to see maximum program action. When you are talking to or playing with one child or a small group, sit or stand so that the whole group is in your field of vision and keep your eyes moving.

5. The railroad track means **KEEP TRACK**. Keep track of children who go from one area to another and children who go to the bathroom. Make sure the child gets to the supervised area or back from the bathroom in a reasonable time. If you use 2-way radios to communicate in different activity areas, **KEEP TRACK** means when you send a child to another space, listen for confirmation that the child has arrived.

6. The picture of the adults leading in the front of the group and the back of the group is all about moving groups of kids. When there is only one staff person this means **TAKE THE LEAD**. It doesn't mean single

file lines. It means stay in the front of the group. You always have runners and stragglers – kids who move quickly and those who move slowly. If the adult is in the middle of the group it becomes unmanageable quickly. But if the staff person takes the lead, he can control the speed of the group and keep supervision tight. This means children should never get into a new unsupervised area ahead of you. You must survey the area you are entering for safety hazards before entering. Don't let children run ahead of you even to the playground or activity room. When you have more than one staff person moving a group of kids form a sandwich – the staff are the bread and the kids are all the stuff that stays in between the bread.



**This window pane illustrates the 9 Elements of Quality Super Vision**

7. The stop sign means stop. **PREPARE** trouble before it starts. Watch for potential trouble. If you think the kids are going something which is dangerous, **STOP** them. If they argue that someone else lets them do it, tell them that may be so, but you are in charge of safety now and you say NO. Discuss this conflict with the rest of the staff and develop consistent rules later, but for the moment go with your "gut" feeling. When you see something and wonder if you should stop it or not... Stop It.
8. The child going down the slide on a skateboard is about to get seriously injured and his parents are going to sue you and they are going to win. This pane means **USE EQUIPMENT CORRECTLY**. Use all equipment and playground structures the way the equipment was designed to be used. For example, do not let children climb up the outside of slides. Do not allow children to walk tight-rope-style across the monkey bars. Do not allow children to jump off of swings. Do not help children onto equipment that they cannot climb onto and off of by themselves. Do not let them climb on things that are not built for climbing like picnic tables or bicycle racks.
9. And finally, the calendar means **PLAN AHEAD** for plenty of positive activity choices. Visualize the activities in advance, plan your work and then work your plan. Plan ahead for high risk activities. Plan ahead for transitions. Plan ahead for things to do when there is nothing to do. Kids who are engaged in activities are easier to supervise than bored kids. Be sure that the children in your group have plenty of acceptable behavior options to choose.

## **Discussion Questions:**

1. How well are children supervised at your site?
2. Do children get into unsupervised areas?
3. Are they checked up on when they go to the bathroom?
4. What are the strengths and weaknesses of your site in terms of supervision?
5. What are your individual strengths and weaknesses?
6. What can be done to improve the supervision of the team?

## **Habit #2 has Two Parts: Vision & Values**

*If you want to move people, it has to be toward a vision that's positive for them, that taps important values, that gets them something they desire, and it has to be presented in a compelling way. That way, they feel inspired to follow. —Martin Luther King Jr.*

### **Vision**

*"Without a vision the people will perish." – King Solomon*

Vision is about charting the course, steering the ship. You have to know where you want to go before steering the ship. You've gotta know how you want things to be before attempting to lead. By definition leaders must know where they are going if they hope to lead. Leaders who don't know in which direction to go succeed only in leading people down an aimless and meaningless path. Developing a vivid picture of the future is an important part of creating a future that is better than today. Having a clear, motivating image of a desired future provides meaning and context to daily tasks. Focusing on a vision for the future can inspire people to reach higher and overcome challenges. Once created, a vision will help to structure decision making and policy setting in a program.

Visioning is a common, but effective strategy proven useful in many endeavors. Olympic athletes visualize themselves performing their specific feats, and this visualization is effective in helping them to perform better. Albert Einstein imagined himself traveling through the universe as a "man in a box" on a ray of light. This vision helped him develop the theory of general relativity.

Future-focused thinking is the one attribute that a leader must possess to create and shape an "intentional program." An intentional program is purposeful, created and led with a specific goal in mind. An intentional program is grounded in specific objectives and it has a plan of action designed to accomplish these objectives. The culture of an intentional program reflects a deliberate focus on a specific end result. In order for the program to be purposeful, goal oriented, grounded in specific objectives, and focused on an end result, the leader must be able to see and articulate a vision—to chart a course for the future.

A good vision is ideological, but possible; challenging, but realistic. It is not a wishful fantasy, but an attainable picture of the future. A good vision should be imaginable, desirable, feasible, focused, flexible, and communicable. A good vision depicts an image of the future with some implicit or explicit



commentary on why people should strive to create that future. A vision can be a mental picture of the “ideal” organization, community, or youth program. Studies have shown that people are more likely to reach a goal if they can envision it and can imagine the steps to reach it.

Clarity of purpose and direction, and the ability to envision the future are paramount to effective leadership. Whether we call this a vision, a dream, a calling, a goal, or a personal agenda, the message is clear: leaders must know where they’re going if they expect others to willingly join them on the journey. Vision is the magnetic north that provides others with the capacity to chart their course toward the future.

### **Try This: Visionary Exercises**

Try out one of the following exercises:

- Envision an article written in the future about you or your program.
- Imagine yourself receiving an award for a major accomplishment. What is the award for? What did you accomplish?
- Think about an ideal afterschool program. What does it look like, sound like, feel like, and smell like? Make a list of the things that are already in place in your programs. Identify relatively easy, inexpensive actions you can take to improve quality.
- Politely question policies and procedures that don’t make sense to you. Ask why they are in place and learn about the problem they are supposed to solve. Now try to think of better solutions to these problems.

### **Values**

*Happiness is that state of consciousness which proceeds from the achievement of one's values. - Ayn Rand*

Highly-effective afterschool leaders use a values-based framework and a code of ethics to guide them in visioning and strategic planning. What are your beliefs and values; the values of the field and of your individual program?

For example, in our organization, we believe that quality school-age care is more than a safe place for kids to be while their parents are working, and it is more than a fun place to be. It is one of the few times in a child’s day that provides the opportunity to interact positively with children of different ages. It is perhaps the only time in a day that leaders have the time to give significant one-on-one attention to individual children. We have the unique ability to teach the social skills that are essential in youth development, delinquency prevention, and the development of the future citizens of this country. We believe that we can join in true partnership with the family and the school in the role of participating in the positive development and education of our children.

In our organization, we value all of the people that make our organization strong, so we treat them as professionals, pay them competitively, invest in their training and professional development, treat them with caring and respect, help them to build their competencies, and trust them to act in the best interest of children and of our organization. We value long-term, big-picture, out-of-the-box thinking, so we look deeply into complex interrelationships, invest in wise decision making and problem solving, and give knowledge, information, power, and control to all of our leaders. We value lifelong-learning, so children and all leaders are encouraged to learn through their experiences. We value quality, so we exceed quality standards and provide a place for nurturing and the development of life skills. We value our children and our families, so we facilitate positive child development, workforce development, and

societal contribution. We value ethical standards, so we facilitate honesty, fairness, respect, responsibility, trustworthiness, citizenship, and caring.

Our values helped us create our vision. The vision of Children's Choice is that of a wonderful place filled with an extended family in true partnership with schools and families. It is a community that nurtures and truly cares for children, staff, and families. It is a mini-society that challenges children, staff, and families to be their best. It is a place where children, staff, and families learn and develop life skills. It is a place that "makes easier" the positive development and education of children. The vision of Children's Choice is to see healthier children, healthier families, and a healthier community.

### **Try This: State Your Vision**

Go ahead, visualize your ideal life. Describe it. Create statements of beliefs and values, a mission statement for yourself personally, for your program, or for your organization. Use this to help you create a broad vision statement. If it sounds like motherhood and apple pie and is somewhat embarrassing, you are on the right track.

### **Discussion Questions:**

1. If you looked into a crystal ball, what would your organization or program look like in ten years?
2. Are you focused on the right questions? Take a moment and reflect what you spend your time thinking about when it comes to the future of your program and the role you play.
3. Do you see yourself as a future-focused visionary leader? Are you satisfied with the state of your program? If not, what differences would you like to see? What is an ideal future?

## **Habit #3 has Three Parts: The Afterschool Programming Triad – the ERE**

*When we create rich environments, supportive relationships, and engaging experiences, children have the opportunity to learn life-skills needed for optimum development. – Laurie Ollhoff*

When intentionally designing an afterschool program, three basic programming tools to consider are the Environment, Relationships and Experiences (ERE). We have an influence on children through the Environment we create, the Relationships we develop, and the Experiences we provide for them.

### **Environment**

When you walk into a gymnasium, you behave differently than when you walk into a library. When you walk into a funeral home, you might behave the same as if you walked into a government building, but you might feel differently. You see, the environment says things to people about the way they should behave and feel. Similarly, the afterschool environment tells children some important things about the way they should behave and feel, so it is important that leaders provide an environment that encourages desirable behavior. The space should say "Play with me!" in a way that clearly defines how to play with it.

Highly-effective afterschool leaders initially provide an environment, which meets the basic biological needs of children, taking into consideration safety, nutrition, and water. They then add novelty and stimulation to the environment by creating a variety of areas in which children can be involved in diverse ways: art, construction, fine motor, quiet conversation, food, science, strategy games, and outdoor play. Afterschool leaders can provide novelty and enrich the environment through new colors, posters, child's art, and music.

**Indoor space:** The indoor space needs to be clean and colorful, interesting and inviting, and it needs to reflect the children -their varying ages, cultures and special interests. It needs to be broken up into different areas, providing a variety of activity choices. It needs to be labeled; clearly communicating what privileges and expectations children have in each area. It needs to be homelike, and contain at least one very homelike area.

Planning and preparing the environment can be an activity! Get the children involved in designing the space. Generate some discussion and have them write suggested floor plans. Include science, art, construction, science, homelike, drama, and snack areas. Give them the feeling of ownership, while teaching them citizenship. If you involve all of the children, it will help your environment to reflect your group of kids and what they like.

In another area, make a special interest place that changes regularly. In this area, put any kind of fun thing that you can think of, or any special thing that interests a leader or the children currently. The key here is variety. Have plenty of choices and opportunity to do many things that will interest many different children, so that they are having fun and are engaged and less likely to misbehave. Misbehavior is often due to boredom or activity choices that are too difficult, too limiting, or not challenging enough to meet the needs of certain children.

**Outdoor Space:** Outdoor space is very important to quality and to behavior management. The playground is a kid's world and it needs to stay that way. It is a place where they can learn life. They learn about government and global domination by staking out territory, forming alliances and making treaties. They are under constant staff supervision, but they have the opportunity to spread out and call a place their own, and feel like they are on their own. That is very important to them.

Playgrounds need to be safe, and it is the responsibility of every afterschool leader to ensure that it is. Establish rules: playground equipment was designed to be used in a certain way, as a rule of thumb - require children to use the equipment in the way it was meant to be used. Establish boundaries: allowing children to use only the amount of space that the supervising leaders can safely supervise.

Effective afterschool leaders create special interest centers outside too. Sand toys are a great way to allow for dramatic play outside. Children will construct extravagant make believe places, with no material at all, but making some shovels, buckets, sifters and some cars will help the process along.

Allowing children to build forts outside is another way to allow for dramatic play, but make sure forts allow for supervision of the children inside by leaders that are outside. Bubble making is a great outdoor interest center, all you need is a bucket of dish soap and water and some handmade or store bought bubble makers. Water tables and other water activities are great outdoors. Make sure to have plenty of outdoor equipment available: playground balls, softball set, footballs, soccer balls, frisbees, ropes, parachute, etc.



## Relationships

Relationships are important in the social context of the school and school-age care community. Relationships between adults, between children, and between adult and child must be positive. Research shows that children who develop a positive identity are more likely to experience academic achievement, positive peer relationships, and community service. Children who do not develop a positive identity are

more likely to engage in a wide variety of negative behaviors including violence, early sexual behavior, school behavior concerns and the use of drugs. Positive identity includes developing a sense of personal empowerment, a sense of purpose, a positive view of personal future and high self-esteem. It is important to provide opportunities to succeed through empowerment by the intentional programming of the adult-child relationships in school-age care programs. Self-esteem is the ability to respect oneself and to think highly or favorably of oneself, and it is very important that this ability not be squashed, but nurtured and protected.

Self-esteem, self-worth, self-image, and self-acceptance are all terms used to describe the way people think and feel about themselves -- adequate or inadequate, likable or unlikable, lovable or unlovable, valuable or worthless, smart or stupid, good looking or ugly. An adult can squash a child's self-esteem, but cannot alone build a child's esteem. Self-esteem comes from inside people and cannot be developed externally. Self-esteem is an internal asset that is built when children do things that they have a right to be proud of. Highly effective afterschool leaders facilitate the development of social competencies, decision-making, community responsibility and other skills and abilities that allow children to develop a positive image of themselves, their abilities and their personal future.

The way children feel about themselves depends largely on their response to the "feedback" they have received from the important people in their lives. If these people have helped children to feel significant, empowered, and loved, they will be inclined to have a positive self-image. If people give children a reason to feel inadequate and unneeded, they are apt to find themselves thinking they are a failure and do not have anything positive to offer, so they tend to offer negative behavior. It is important for school-age care leaders to provide boundaries and high expectations for children and to value them as important people who have a role in society.

Leaders must facilitate the internal development of self-esteem in every child, through self-discipline, empowerment, high expectations, and through having a role in the program. When this is done, most discipline problems fail to materialize. The personality of the leader is a primary factor to building a relationship of trust and respect. There are few skills the leader may consciously develop to gain the influence that will tend to result in higher self-esteem.

- Have a genuine liking for each child in the program.
- Avoid showing favoritism.
- Show sympathy and understanding.
- Employ democratic methods.
- Have faith in children to accomplish tasks and do the right thing.
- Be extremely fair in decisions.
- Have a sense of humor.
- Give sincere compliments regularly.
- Be consistent in attitude, behaviors and decisions.
- Use phrases like "Knowing you I'm sure you'll do fine," "I can see you put a lot of effort into that," "You can figure it out," "I have faith in you", and "Don't worry we all make mistakes."
- Avoid saying things like "Let me do that for you," "Better get some help," "If you can't do it right don't do it at all," "You can do better," "That looks too difficult for you," and "Don't touch it, you'll

break it."

Highly-effective afterschool leaders work to establish and encourage realistic boundaries and high expectations for children. High expectations provide children with the appropriate novelty, challenge and feedback necessary for brain enrichment. Afterschool providers can plan interactions with fun, caring, authoritative, and mature adults who are experts in child development. They plan for interactions between children of different ages who model responsible behavior and share a sense of community. Challenging, interactive feedback is a key to brain enrichment.

## Experiences

Highly-effective afterschool leaders intentionally use variety and novelty. Novelty in the form of experiential learning is the key to brain enrichment. Afterschool leaders provide a variety of enriching experiences such as field trips, guest speakers, computers, games, role plays and dramatic play, art activities, and long and short-term projects.

Afterschool leaders provide a mix of child-directed and adult-directed activities. Research indicates that children can learn to play a musical instrument or speak a new language more easily before the age of ten; therefore, afterschool leaders can provide enriching experiences like music and language.

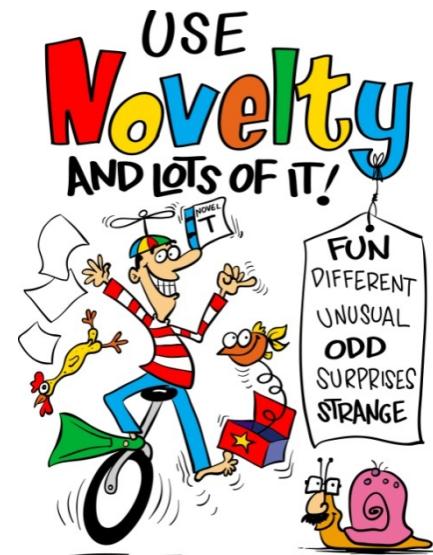
Knowing that motor stimulation and activities requiring hand-eye coordination stimulate neural growth patterning, afterschool leaders should provide sports and other novel sources of motor stimulation. Knowing that challenging problem-solving helps grow a better brain, they should involve children in and teach them about creative problem-solving. Afterschool leaders should teach children to identify problems, redefine the problems as goals, brainstorm about possible solutions, select and implement solutions and follow through on the consequences of their actions, knowing that neural growth happens through problem-solving, regardless of the solution.

Highly-effective afterschool leaders also provide problem-solving opportunities through science, math, and building projects. Knowing that art has a dramatic, positive, measurable, and long-lasting effect on brain development and social development, they should provide creative, playful art experiences. When planning for experiences, they plan for building a sense of community, rather than providing activity for the activities' sake.

**Planning the Activities:** The time spent goal setting and planning and visualizing how you plan for things to run will have significant pay offs in behavior management. Planning minimizes waiting/down times, allows for organized transition times, ensures variety for the children, and therefore, reduces misbehavior that is caused from boredom.

**Why Plan?** - Children will generally find ways of occupying themselves, even if no plans are made. Why then should you bother to plan at all?

1. Planning ensures the variety and novelty that the brain craves. The more choices a child has the more possibilities a child has to be involved in a positive and appropriate way.
2. Planning cuts down on the amount of conflicts children have. Children need free time, but when children have too much free time, boredom leads to misbehavior.
3. Planning is a way of assessing quality in the program, passing useful information on to other leaders and recording for future reference what was done at the center.



4. Planning sets forth specific responsibilities for leaders, aides, and volunteers.
5. Planning provides an outline, which determines what supplies, materials and duties will be needed on a given day.
6. Planning provides substitute coordinators and teachers with information in the event that a leader is absent.
7. Planning makes it possible to inform school administration and parents of program activities. It is very important that educators and parents see afterschool leaders as professionals who believe in quality and in the education and development of children.

### **Vital Curriculum Planning Elements – NOVELTY is the key!**

1. Active play and passive activity choices.
2. Opportunities to be creative: art (not packaged projects), drama, dance, music, & play.
3. Opportunities for the kids to be involved in the planning and operating of the program.
4. Diverse activity choices, which reflect on the cultures of the program and community.
5. Activities designed by older kids and with older kids in mind.
6. Opportunities for the program to be involved in helping the community.
7. Opportunities for children to develop life skills such as cooking, earning money, etc.
8. Opportunities for families to be involved in the school-age care program.
9. Long and short-term projects for children to see through to the end.
10. Have Fun! Fun, playful activities that children truly love!

**Put your plans in writing:** In addition to the promotional activity schedules produced for the clients, each coordinator should make more specific and detailed written plans. The daily plans should model the daily schedule in the parent manual, but be filled with details. It is advisable for coordinators to post this more detailed daily plan at the parent center (on an eraser board), so that parents can see the depth of planning involved. This daily plan should include approximate times, what is given for snack, free time, adult and child directed activities, interest centers, scheduled activities, transition and cleanup times, announcements and discussion/round up. Now that you have spent all of this time planning, planning, planning - be flexible. Your written plans are an outline. Stick closely to the outline, but if you have planned a game of super silly soccer and the children do not want to play, then substitute other opportunities for active play for the super silly soccer game. Remember that offering activities that are interesting and enjoyable to the children in the ultimate goal, so you must sometimes sacrifice the plans for whatever works!

### **Discussion Questions:**

1. Visualize your program environment. Are there patterns of misbehavior you could prevent by tweaking your environment? Can you incorporate more novelty by replacing elements in the décor?
2. Is there a strong sense of community in your program? When conflict does occur, is it resolved peacefully? Do the staff and kids seem to have a genuine liking of each other?
3. Are kids experiencing engaging activities that they enjoy? How can you add more enriching

experiences into your program – experiences that kids wouldn't have if it weren't for your program?

## Habit #4 has Four Parts: Knowledge, Information, Power, & Control.

*A leader is best when people barely know he exists. Not so good when people obey and acclaim him. Worse when they despise him. But of a good leader who talks little when his work is done, and his aim fulfilled they will say, "We did it ourselves." —Lao Tsu*



Habit #4 is all about organizational culture – it is all about “how things are done around here.” Our organization was built on a leadership philosophy that many refer to as a “learning organization.” A learning organization is a non-hierarchical organization where all stakeholders are involved in deciding how the organization will conduct itself. Knowledge, information, power, and control are not held by lone managers; instead leaders develop people.

Empowerment is defined as giving employees the knowledge and information they need to assume more autonomy and responsibility within an organization. It is an enabling process that increases the intrinsic task motivation for employees and increases their self-efficacy—the individual's belief that he or she is capable. The outcomes of empowerment are employees who are more effective, innovative, and capable of exerting influence, and who have higher levels of job satisfaction and lower levels of stress

Highly-effective leaders establish a helpful, service-oriented culture. Give employees the knowledge and information they need, then empower them to make independent decisions and solve problems, and you will create happier leaders, happier customers, and a happier YOU.

### Sharing Knowledge

Training is often seen as a frill in many programs—something to be cut if profits diminish. This is an example of the short-term thinking that enslaves managers and inhibits the development of a high-involvement program. Knowledge and skills are crucial to programs, and too few programs designate their resources in ways that honor this insight. Training involves establishing clear boundaries and high expectations that build upon information sharing. Ken Blanchard's second key to empowerment is to “Create autonomy through boundaries.” Boundaries establish a purpose; they define the “business of the business.” They establish values and operational guidelines. They establish long-term strategic thinking. They help translate the goals for the program and roles for the stakeholders. The vision of an organization truly becomes alive when everyone sees where his or her contribution can make a difference. Training is a vehicle to these ends.

When typical programs do spend money and time on training, most training covers policies and procedures. It often includes how to handle situations according to “upper management.” Instead of teaching leaders only “how” to do something, teach them “why.” Teach leaders how to problem solve. How to identify a problem and how to think about all the options they have available to them. When you spend training time and energy on explaining the standard or the “boundary” and how to solve



problems you empower your leaders. Let the team decide how to best meet the expectation with their available resources. Every team and every site has different situations. The traditional mold won't work for everyone.

Training leads to empowerment by teaching others things they can do to become less dependent on you. Training is an essential component of high-involvement programs because this paradigm relies on "frontline" employee skill and initiative to identify, solve problems, initiate solutions, serve the needs of families, and take responsibility for safety and quality.

You will know when you are giving your leaders enough information because they will need you less. It may begin to feel like you are no longer a good leader. Before founding our organization, Chelsea was the director of a large corporate child care center in New Mexico. This is her story.

The company had over a hundred centers across the nation, and we often got together for retreats and training events. At every break at one of my first retreats all the directors in my division would rush into the hall to return pages or phone messages with their staff back at their centers. I never got one message. I began to feel useless and not needed. I made this comment to my regional manager and she told me something very memorable. She said, "Chelsea, it is a sign of a good leader when your staff do not need you. You have trained them well."

## Sharing Information

*The ultimate leader is one who is willing to develop people to the point that they eventually surpass him or her in knowledge and ability.—Fred A. Manske, Jr.*

Sharing of information is an essential component of high-performance programs. Ken Blanchard, world-recognized guru of leadership and customer service says, "The first key of empowerment is to share information with everyone!" It lets people understand the current situation in clear terms. It begins to build trust throughout the program. It breaks down traditional hierarchical thinking. It helps people be more responsible, and it encourages people to act like owners of the program.

Sharing information about financial performance, administrative strategies, and long-term planning sends a message that the organization's people are trusted.

Chelsea teaches a college course on child care management. This is her story.

When it is time to teach about budget development, I ask my students to bring in a copy of the budget from their own organization. I was at first surprised and continue to be disheartened at how many students are not allowed to see the budget of the organization they work for. They tell me that their directors tell them that the information is confidential and can only be seen by the owner and center director. If you want to create a high-involvement program, you can't have secrets.

## ***Power Staff = the Top of the Organization***

**Caregivers, Group Leaders, Assistant Directors, & Site Directors:**

Those who facilitate the positive development of children, and create the model of quality.

### ***Support Staff:***

Builds Capacity  
Financial Resources  
Fiscal Management  
Information  
Budget Forecasting

**Director  
of Finances  
& Office Staff.**

### ***Support Staff:***

Model of Quality,  
Safety Control,  
Quality Control,  
Mentoring, and  
Guidance to Staff,  
Improvement &  
Accreditation

**Programs Directors**

### ***Support Staff:***

Partnerships, Advocacy,  
Research, Resource  
Development, Outreach,  
Training, Technical  
Assistance  
Community

**Executive Director**

## **Values, Mission, Vision**

Employees of empowering programs know not only what is happening in the program but why and how it could affect their jobs and careers. If you want leaders at all levels to show good fiscal management skills, to conserve supplies, to feel ownership and responsibility for the financial strength of your program, they NEED to share in the information. "Open-book" management creates ownership and shared responsibility. People without information cannot act responsibly. People with information are compelled to act responsibly. Sharing information motivates employees by providing relevancy. Employees must have all of the knowledge and information they need to effectively exercise the power and control they must have to be self-directed. Give your organization's budget information or your program budget to your staff. Teach them how to read and analyze it. Spend time discussing it and answering questions.

## Sharing Power and Control

*He who has never learned to obey cannot be a good commander.—Aristotle*

Ken Blanchard's third key to empowerment is "To replace hierarchy with self-directed work teams!" Less bureaucratic, elitist, hierarchical, and authoritarian organizations can create self-managed teams that are more communicative, participatory, and empowered. Self-managed teams permit removal of layers of hierarchy and absorption of administrative tasks. Empowered TEAMS can do more than empowered INDIVIDUALS. Teams with information and training can replace hierarchy. When power and control are decentralized all of the people in the program feel accountable and responsible for the success of the program and the accomplishment of the mission. Child care and youth development programs are a uniquely good fit for self-managed teams because individual sites provide a cellular structure for the identification of these teams. Each site can become a self-managed team, trained and empowered to facilitate the positive development of children and meet the needs of families.

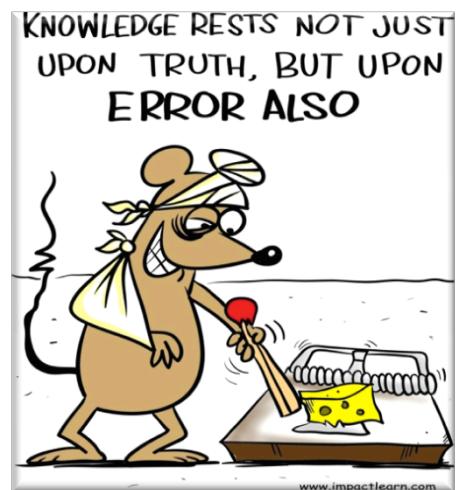
In a classic experiment, management gave factory employees a lever that controlled how fast they could operate the assembly line. They were at first afraid that employees would take advantage and slow down production. They were later surprised that employees actually worked faster when they felt in control of their work. Employees who participate in decision making, collecting information, generating alternatives, and implementing decisions have an increased sense of control and commitment. In our organization, all leaders participate in developing policy, designing their own evaluation instruments, and making all hiring decisions. Caregivers participate in the hiring decisions of their potential site directors and thereby become more committed to the supervisor who is eventually hired. Self-directed teams lead to increased job satisfaction; an attitude change from "have to" to "want to;" greater employee commitment; better communication between employees and management; a more efficient decision-making process; improved quality of services; reduced operating expenses; and a more profitable and successful program.

## Making Mistakes

*When you mess up, fess up. — Unknown*

*Failure is the foundation of success, and the means by which it is achieved. —Lao Tsu*

In learning organizations mistakes are accepted and expected. Leaders of programs must continuously learn and constantly reinvent themselves. Leaders learn from their mistakes and experiences. Leaders take risks, make mistakes, and gain satisfaction from the lessons they learn. They see learning not as a confession of ignorance, but as a way of being. Lead learners must view mistakes as



steppingstones to continuous learning, and essential to further business growth.

If mistakes are not being made, new possibilities are being ignored. The world's greatest advances and discoveries were the result of mistakes. Members of Learning Organizations learn from their mistakes, learn to take responsibility for them, and learn not to repeat them. Thomas Edison once said, "I have not failed. I've just found ten thousand ways that won't work."

An effective leader must be big enough to admit his mistakes, smart enough to profit from them, and strong enough to correct them. Anyone who refuses to profit by his mistakes is a fool. Every mistake is an opportunity to increase competency.

Chelsea has a story about the value hidden within mistakes. Here is her story. A few years back, a site director of ours made one of the worst mistakes someone can make in our field: she left a five-year-old at a field trip site, violating one of our very few strict procedures.

She called me as the bus was about to arrive at her site to inform me that she had just realized this child was missing. I raced to pick the child up and met my site director and the child's angry parents in the parking lot of our school. By the time the parents left, the site director was in tears. I looked at her and just said, "Meet me at 9:30 in my office tomorrow morning."

I was not sure what I was going to do. The obvious solution was to fire her. Most supervisors would not have questioned this. At 9:30 the next day, she was in my office with a stack of papers. She had stayed up most of the night writing down how she had left the child back. She also had spent most of the night writing down all the ways she would never let that happen again if allowed to keep her job. We talked extensively about what happened and how she planned to prevent this from happening in the future. She had analyzed the situation well. I let her stay and here's why.

Because of that mistake, I could practically guarantee that no child from that site would ever get left behind on a field trip as long as that site director was in charge. Not only could I make that guarantee, but that site director stood up at every new-hire orientation for the next three years and told that story (usually in tears) when we got to the field trip procedures. By accepting that mistake and learning from it, we gained more than we could have by firing her and hiring a brand new site director who could just as easily make the same mistake.

People say, "Success always takes place in private, and failure in the full view of others." I say, "If at first you don't succeed, destroy all evidence that you tried!" My daughter says, "If at first you don't succeed, get new batteries."

## **Discussion Questions**

1. Do you have horror stories about terrible service you have received? Do you have examples of great service? Think about the people responsible for the service you received. Were they empowered or not?
2. Think about your current job. What power does your boss withhold from you? What would you like more power and control over?
3. What power do you withhold from your leaders? What can you delegate to your leaders to help them grow and learn and develop?
4. Does your boss share all the information with you that you need to do your job well? Do you withhold information from your leaders? Do they have the information they need about the budget or about how the organization operates that would help them to feel more ownership?
5. Can you identify status differences in your program? Do people in power get special perks that the

more “lowly” people are denied? Are these differences necessary?

## Habit #5 is Influence

*Pull the string, and it will follow wherever you wish. Push it, and it will go nowhere at all.—Dwight D. Eisenhower*

*Leadership is getting someone to do what they don't want to do, to achieve what they want to achieve.—Tom Landry*

*The key to successful leadership today is influence, not authority.—Ken Blanchard*

Leadership is about influence, not power. Highly-effective leaders know how to tap into the hearts and minds of their followers. If you stand and look over the shoulders of those you supervise, you'll never get people who care about their jobs. We do not preach the old “carrot and stick” approach to influence. Rather, we will teach you how to get intrinsic, true, inner motivation.



According to the old-school organizational cliché, what gets rewarded gets done. So, many organizations offer rewards such as profit-sharing, bonuses, employee of the month programs, prizes, and special parking spaces to influence employees. These are classic examples of extrinsic or token rewards. Extrinsic rewards can significantly lower intrinsic motivation and can create reliance upon the rewards. In situations that are already intrinsically rewarding, the addition of extrinsic rewards may reduce the effectiveness of the intrinsic rewards. Extrinsic rewards are effective in teaching a rat to run a maze, but are not effective in influencing staff performance.

Rewards fail to make deep lasting changes because they are aimed at affecting only what people do and not at what they think and feel. If employers want to do nothing more than induce compliance in employees, then rewards may be a valid practice. If employers want staff members to be self-disciplined, self-motivated workers, then rewards are worse than useless; they are counterproductive.

Our philosophy is that what is rewarding gets done. We know that we can never pay people enough to care—to care about the children, families, supplies, schools, or even the bottom line. Highly effective leaders tap into peoples' hearts and minds, not merely their hands and wallets. Highlighting the intrinsic rewards of our work rather than focusing on rewards creates higher levels of commitment. Human organizations, be they homeless shelters, schools, or child care programs, can give employees the opportunity to make a difference to society, to facilitate the positive development of children, to prevent juvenile delinquency, to develop productive citizens, and in the long term to make healthier families and healthier communities possible.

### Learning is Influence

People have an intrinsic desire to learn. Learning is intrinsically rewarding, but when you extrinsically reward learning you devalue that behavior. In studies of parents who reward good grades or remove privileges for bad grades, their children become less interested in learning and are less likely to succeed in school. These observations about basic principles of human motivation apply to adults as well as children, both of whom are driven by intrinsic desire to learn. Being challenged to learn and do better than we've ever done before compels us to grow – that's influence.

### Pleasure is Influence

People find things intrinsically motivating if they derive pleasure from the experience and pleasure from using their skills. For leaders to influence others, they must find opportunities for people to solve problems, make discoveries, explore new ground, and have fun.

### **Try This: Double Your Pleasure**

Make a list of the pleasurable experiences people have at your organization. What is fun? Now ask other employees to create a list. How do your lists compare? Think of ways to add more pleasure and fun.

### **Acknowledgement is Influence**

Influential leaders can provide feedback and coaching to enhance their influence. Showing genuine concern and respect for those doing the work boosts intrinsic motivation.

Imagine you are in your work setting and your supervisor approaches you and says, "Excuse me, do you have a moment? I'd like to talk to you." What would be your first thoughts? Yep, what did I do now, what am I in trouble for? When supervisors only provide positive feedback and acknowledgement during a staff meeting or at an annual evaluation, when it is "planned" acknowledgement, it seems fake. Effective leaders carefully observe their followers and seek out opportunities to provide on-the-spot feedback. Spontaneous and unexpected acknowledgement and appreciation for good work and for effort in and of itself is effective for developing intrinsic motivation. In fact, personal congratulations rank at the top of the most powerful non-financial motivators identified by employees.

### **Try This: Acknowledge Effort**

Think about how often people are appreciated in your program. Find at least three more ways employees can be acknowledged for their work. Make sure to acknowledge effort as well as success and help create a climate where everyone, not just the leader, acknowledges each other.

### **Relevancy is Influence**

Imagine that we put up a painting, and around it is an old beat-up scratched frame. Does the frame influence your perception of the picture? We suspect so. Now imagine, instead of that old frame we put up a brand new, beautiful frame lighted just right. Does that influence your perception? Again, we suspect so, although the painting never changed. Frames are how we choose to look at something. We learn from our experiences, yes, but what we learn depends upon the frame we put around it. Frames establish relevancy. They answer the question of "what's in it for me?" WIIFM?

Framing is a great tool for influencing people. If I command someone to do something, I might get obedience, but not influence because there is no relevancy. If we want our leaders to attend a training event, we might say, "I know that your weekends are precious to you, but licensing requires that you all get twenty-four clock hours of training per year. This Saturday there is a training event and it is mandatory, so don't be late, and don't forget to get a signature on your certificate to prove that you were there." Wow, wouldn't you be excited to be at that training? No?

What if we framed it like this? "I have noticed that the children in your program sometimes misbehave and this stresses you out. I've got good news for you. We've found someone who conducts a great training on guidance. In just one day you can learn some skills that will reduce your stress, make your job easier, and get the kinds of behavior that makes you truly LOVE working with these kids!" Better right? It is still the same training event, but with a different frame.

Framing can work with employees, bosses, even spouses. If you can't positively frame something you want your leaders to do or learn, reconsider whether you need them to do it. If it is important to do, then

find a frame that fits! Think about the person and what is relevant to them, not how it is relevant to YOU.

Our older daughter was a little afraid of the water. We planned to take a vacation one summer to spend some time with friends who happen to have a lake house: jet skis, motorboat, a dock to jump off of into the lake. We thought it was important for her to learn how to swim. When she'd try to put her head under water, typically only part of her face would get wet. We enrolled her in swimming lessons. She was in the pool with a group of six-year olds. Her swimming teacher was a young man.



He began the class by saying, "Okay kids, it is really important for you to learn what I'm going to teach you in this class." I grinned really big and looked at Chelsea and said, "Cool—he's about to FRAME it!" Chelsea said, "You are such a dork!"

The swimming teacher continued, "The reason it is so important for you to learn what I'm going to teach you is that at the end of this class there will be a test. If you don't learn this then you can't pass into the more advanced class next summer."

I shook my head in disgust. He missed a great opportunity to establish relevancy.

When we got home, Chelsea and I put a new frame around the lessons. "Madison, we're going to the lake house this summer. Last summer when we went there you had to wear the life jacket all the time. It was big, bulky, and smelly. You couldn't go on the boat or the jet skis or do a lot of the things you wanted to do because you couldn't swim. You were afraid of the water. We were thinking that if you learned to swim really well, you wouldn't be afraid, you wouldn't have to wear the life jacket all the time, and you'd have more fun in the water! How does that sound to you?" That summer the little girl who would only dunk part of her face under water was jumping off the dock, laughing and squealing and having fun with the other kids.

### **Discussion Questions**

1. How does your team view staff learning? What systemic changes can you predict will result from team learning? If your whole team learns more about \_\_\_, it will result in \_\_\_, which will lead to \_\_\_.
2. Think about your day-to-day work environment. What does it look and sound like? Is pleasure a part of the culture of your program? Is laughter frequent?
3. How often do you provide sincere, spontaneous acknowledgment to your leaders? How often does your boss provide you with positive feedback? Do you think more genuine and specific acknowledgment and feedback would affect your own motivation?
4. Think about a typical task you ask your leaders to do or a task that you wish your leaders would do more of. How could you frame the work like we have framed each chapter? The work can be the whole job or individual tasks. Make sure the frame answers the question "what's in it for me?" (WIIFM).

## **Habit #6 is Community Building**

Community Building is habit that is a paradigm shift away from "activity-led" programming, which creates a curriculum centered on the activities – activities to keep kids busy and out of our hair. Activities without attention to purpose or ethical dimension of community building miss the opportunity to

facilitate the child's social development.

We believe in an afterschool program all the activities should have a purpose. In autumn when the leaves fall we see leaf crafts o-plenty! Afterschool program leaders have children making leaf prints, leaf collages, leaf mobiles, leaf placemats, and preserving leafs between sheets of waxed paper. Now... there is nothing wrong with leaf crafts in and of themselves. But often these projects are all about making the final product – a piece of refrigerator art for parents to attach to their refrigerators with magnetic fruit. These projects miss an opportunity to teach leadership, sharing, caring, altruism, and empathy.



A highly effective leader in our afterschool program named Ursula had a different idea about what to do with all the falling leaves. Ursula wanted to start a leaf-raking club: go out into the community with a group of kids and beautify the neighborhood. I remember how much I love jumping into piles of leaves as a kid. The jump was fun enough to make raking up the leaves almost pleasurable. But Ursula didn't plan for any jumping – only raking. So in my mind I thought, "That will never work." But we have a rule in our program – Never "firehose" someone else's idea.

So, I said, "OK Ursula what do you need from me to get started?" Ursula said, "Just give me some rakes and turn us loose." I purchased fifteen rakes, feeling skeptical about how many kids would volunteer to rake someone else's leaves. I put on my work clothes so I could lend a hand and see for myself how many kids showed up. We had more eager kids than we had rakes.

We got started. We raked a few yards and were proceeding up the walkway to our next house when we heard the screen door slam open. An older man (a retired professor from the University of New Mexico named Dr. Anderson I would learn later) emerged with an angry snarl. He said, "I don't know what you are doing or what you are selling but your are making too much noise and I am trying to work, so MOVE ALONG!"

One of our more vocal boys – Brandon said, "Geez we were just cleaning up the neighborhood for free you old jerk." I shook my head in reproach at Brandon for speaking to an adult in that way. In my mind I said, "Yeah he's right. We were doing a good thing you old jerk!"

We went on to the next house, and the next. A while later we saw Dr. Anderson approaching with a tray full of cups filled with cool lemonade. He said, "I thought you kids might be thirsty." The kids all grabbed a cup and quickly downed them with accompanying gasps and panting. Thirsty kids make funny sounds when they drink!

The next day I got a call from the Principal of the elementary school. She wanted to see me in her office. I felt like a ten year old again.

When I arrived at her office she said, "I got a call from someone in the community about something you were doing on the yards of some of the houses around the school." I thought, "Did that old jerk actually complain?"



She said, "I don't know if you have any idea what you have done. There is this guy – Dr. Anderson. He is

very vocal. Everytime I have a school event he complains about the cars parking in front of his house. When we try to change something on campus he shows up at the town hall meeting to complain. When there is a school bond issue up for a vote, he pickets and puts out "No New Taxes" signs."

I had seen the signs – old jerk.

She said, "Remember when we tried to build that big shade canopy on the playground? Well, Dr. Anderson complained about the potential 'eyesore' so much that the district denied to build it."

I said, "So he complained about us?"

"No, like I said I don't think you have any idea what you have done. This guy comes into my office and said that he doesn't really like kids. Shocker right? He says that he thinks kids are brats with poor parents and that this whole country is going 'to hell in a handbasket.' He says if when he's out walking he sees a group of youth that he walks the other way. Then he starts to tear up. He says that he didn't think kids did anything like this anymore. He was shocked that kids would do something – work hard – for their neighbors, for their community without getting anything in return. He said that he felt like he had been a ... "little resistent" to some of the things I had tried to do at the school."

Understatement.

"He asked if there was anything he could do to SUPPORT the school. So, I put him on the SRC – the school restructuring committee."

Dr. Anderson was on the SRC for a year. Then he became the president of the SRC. Then he chaired a fundraising committee to build a SHADE CANOPY on the school. The committee was so successful we raised enough funds to build TWO shade canopies. Awesome!

The point is that instead of making leaf crafts that fail to take advantage of life skill building opportunities, create activities that have a PURPOSE. A service project like this can empower kids to make a difference. When children feel that the community values and appreciates them they gain a sense of personal power. When highly-effective afterschool leaders give children useful roles, when they experience how they can serve the community, they begin to show interest in making the community a better place.

Community-building is all about creating a sense of belonging. To become happy and successful adults, children need a sense of belonging and membership. Having a sense of belonging to a group makes children feel safer in their surroundings. Safety and a sense of belonging are basic needs that are critical to healthy development.

Community-building is a habit that must be built into intentional programming in the environment, relationships, and experiences. Service projects like Ursula's leaf-raking club facilitate the development of these skills, competencies and behaviors, and they lead to a strong sense of belonging.

Community-building should be the effective leader's "default setting." Every decision that children and adults make is filtered through this default setting of who they are and how they fit in to the group. Giving children and leaders in our programs useful roles, meaningful work and tasks to accomplish builds a strong sense of



community and belonging and membership to the group.

By the way, Ursula's leaf raking club has continued to exist for more than 10 years in numerous forms and variations. It became to be known as the Community Kids Club, the Pay it Forward Club, the Make a Difference Club. Some form of a community-building/community-service club exists in all of our programs. It is a habit.

### Try This: No "Firehosing" Rule

When someone expresses an opinion or has an idea that you disagree with, resist the urge to "fire hose" them. Fire hosing when someone has an opinion or idea and someone on the team (often someone with more "power") extinguishes the idea by listing all of the reasons why it is incorrect or won't work. Replace the word "but" with "and" or "if." Don't say, "That's a good idea, BUT we can't afford it." Instead, say, "That's a good idea, AND it might work, IF you can find a way to afford it." Keep an open mind and you'll get more brains working for you!



### Discussion Questions:

1. Take a look at your activity calendar for next month or next week. Do you see any activities that make you think, "What is the purpose of that?" Don't trash them, instead ask yourself or your staff, "How can we kick that up a notch?" How can we intentionally focus on skill building through that activity?
2. Think about your staff team? Is there a strong sense of teamwork and community among staff? What can you do to build stronger staff relationships?

## Habit #7 is Communication

*Wise men speak because they have something to say. Fools speak because they have to say something.—Plato*

Dynamic and highly-effective afterschool programs are places for generative discussion and intensive action. Language functions as a tool for bonding, innovating, coordinating, and cooperating. People can speak from their hearts and connect with each other in the spirit of dialog—from the Greek dia + logos, moving through.

Dialog is an essential element of organizational learning and highly-effective leadership. Peter Senge identifies three conditions that are necessary for dialog to occur: all participants must suspend their assumptions; all participants must regard one another as colleagues; and there must be a facilitator who holds the context of the dialog (Senge, 1990).

When people talk and listen to each other, they create an alignment of purpose that produces incredible ability to invent new possibilities in conversation and bring about these possibilities in reality. There must be sufficient meeting time scheduled into people's professional calendars to step back from the day-to-day operations and reflect on what is happening in the program. It is important for highly-effective leaders to understand that ideas can be developed best through dialog and discussion. Through dialog, people can predict and solve problems, replace obsolete systems, and create new systems.

Communication is an exchange or sharing of ideas. It is the essence of social interaction. It is the basis of how we see the world and how the world responds to us. We live in a world filled with other people. We live together, work together, and play together. In our personal lives, we need each other for security, comfort, friendship, and love. In our working environment, we need each other in order to achieve our goals and objectives. None of these goals can be achieved without communication.

Communication is the oil of the proverbial “well-oiled machine.” It makes all the parts of an operation run smoothly and effectively. Communication is the basic thread that ties us together. Through communication, we make known our needs, our wants, our ideas, and our feelings. The better we are at communicating, the more effective we are at achieving our hopes and dreams.

When we communicate, we extend something of ourselves into others and take back a part of them. Effective communication is good for interpersonal relationships and organizational effectiveness. It makes growth and change possible, but involves two risks: we may expose what we really are inside, and we may possibly change into something different.

Poor communication skills are at the core of many frustrating relationship problems, whether with coworkers, friends, spouses, children, or authority figures. Barriers, which limit our ability to relate to others, can include fear, impatience, inattentiveness, biases, mistaken assumptions, power and role issues, mistrust, personal behaviors, environmental considerations, and level of understanding.

Communication pitfalls happen when we become unconscious about what we say to others or how we say it. If we are thoughtful about these pitfalls and how they are detrimental to our relationships, then we can make a conscious choice about what we say, how we say it, and how we choose to listen.

We could write an entire book about how to effectively communicate. Believe us; we have learned so much just by being married and by working to stay married! But we know that communication is just one aspect of leadership, so we have just picked our most important seventeen strategies and pitfalls to include here.

### **Seventeen Important Communication Strategies and Pitfalls**

1. Before you open your mouth, W.A.I.T.—that stands for Why Am I Talking. Be clear in your own mind what you want to communicate to others. Think about it and script it out before you speak or write. This is the natural style of the introvert, but it can be especially important and extremely effective for all people when preparing for conversations we know may be difficult.

2. Be accountable. When we are accountable, we know that we are in charge of our life and how we perceive it. No one else can make us do or feel anything. Accountability adds power to our relationships. If we are accountable, there is no room for blame. When we are accountable, we have room to choose our experience of a situation and then move forward with clarity. Don’t say, “She made me feel bad,” instead say “I chose to perceive that as personal.” Don’t say, “He hurt my feelings,” instead say, “I let my feelings be hurt.”

3. What you HEARD is not what I SAID! Strategic planning for the “what” and the “how” of communication can help prevent this. It has been said that when two people talk to each other, six voices are heard:

- What you THINK you say.
- What you actually DO say.
- What the other person THINKS you say.
- What the other person THINKS he says.
- What the other person actually DOES say.
- What you THINK the other person says.

4. Get to know how the other person communicates. Not everyone thinks or communicates the same way.

It is important to know gender, cultural, and individual differences in communication styles, as well as individual communication strengths of the listener. Communicate with others, not in the way you want them to communicate with you, but in the way THEY want you to communicate with them.

5. Say what you mean. Be specific! Vagueness and imprecise language are useless. Speaking the facts allows a clear solution to occur as well as the opportunity for action. Specifics let others know exactly what you want and need. Clarity in our language lets us be more affirmative, direct and effective.

6. Don't dilute yourself. Don't bring up an issue that is important and then dilute it by saying, "But it's not a big deal," or "But we all could be better at that." This passive, wimpy style lowers your effectiveness and thereby lowers your self-esteem. It encourages others to take advantage of you.

7. Be objective and presume positive intentions. Don't presume that because someone does something that makes you angry that the person doesn't care about you. When you communicate an issue, explain what you actually observed or heard and then ask the person to explain his/her intentions, and if necessary specify a more acceptable option. Describe problems in terms of the behavior you see and the standards of behavior you expect. Describe the behaviors you see, its consequences, and your feelings without making accusations and attributing motives.

8. Express only what YOU feel. Don't say or write, "Shirley is really angry with you." Often when this happens, that person goes back to confront Shirley, who says she wasn't angry, but then Shirley gets angry with the person who said that she was. Communicate what YOU feel and let Shirley communicate what she feels.

9. No sideways communicating. In the most destructive form this is gossip. If you have something you wish to communicate about another person, start by communicating it directly with that person. If you need a "sounding board" to rehearse what and how you will communicate, choose a friend or family member who does not relate with the other person, or choose a supervisor. It is not appropriate to talk to the person's peers or subordinates in a negative way.



10. The situation will not go away if you ignore it or avoid it. There are several approaches to take in a conflict resolution situation: forcing/competing, accommodating, compromising, collaborating, and avoiding. Unless tempers are high, avoidance is not the best choice. Avoidance results in frustration from lack of resolution, and it encourages others to use your chosen technique when they need to communicate with you. In other words, if you avoid others, they will avoid you.

11. Say it or stuff it. Don't punish others because you are avoidant. Don't become passively aggressive; don't gossip; don't sulk or pout; don't seek revenge; don't ignore people. If you can't respectfully and assertively communicate your issue, then suck it up and get over it.

12. Use non-verbal communication. Only about 65 percent of our communication is nonverbal. Don't limit yourself to verbal communication. Develop skills in facial expression, tone of voice, and body language. Look interested. Reduce the level of distraction; putting away work or closing a door may send a non-verbal message that you are ready to listen. In written communication, take care to convey the emotion you want. Since written communication is void of emotion, misunderstanding the emotional context is a potential problem.

13. Maintain eye contact. It has been said that males listen with their ears, not their eyes. Males sometimes need to work harder at maintaining eye contact than females, to which it comes more naturally. But eye contact can be interpreted as aggression when the conversation becomes heated. So

remember: not when hot! When it gets “hot,” breaking eye contact may help to diffuse the anger.

14. Listen well. Listen to the true meaning of others. Listen with your whole body. Press your lips together. Sometimes attentive silence is best; giving the speaker uninterrupted time to say what needs to be said. It may be appropriate to ask questions for clarification but be careful to avoid asking questions that detract from the speaker’s main point. Ask open-ended questions. If a speaker has come to you at a time when you cannot give her your full attention, consider letting her know that and setting a specific time to converse.

15. Confirm and clarify. Listen reflectively. Paraphrasing the words, meaning, and emotions of the speaker acknowledges that you understand and provides the opportunity to correct any misunderstandings. Probe for increased understanding by saying, “Please say more about...” or “I’m curious about...”

Repeat what you have heard for clarification. Make sure you’ve got it right!

- “Let me see if I’ve got this right.”
- “So what you’re saying is...”
- “Wait, I’m not sure I got that! Tell me again!”



Ask clarifying questions to make sure you understand things before responding. It is especially important to do this when people use a label or speak in generalities.

- “What do you mean by ‘hyper’ (etc.)?” “Can you give me an example?”
- “What did he do and say?” “What did you have in mind?”
- “What was it you were trying to do?” “What have you tried so far?”

16. Acknowledge and affirm emotions: name it! Acknowledge the feeling behind the concern or demand. Learning to acknowledge the other person’s reality can be enormously helpful. Whatever turn the dialog takes, it is important that you handle it with respect. Even when they are upset or angry, tell them that you are glad that they called or came to speak with you. Tell them that you can’t do anything about a problem you don’t know about. Tell them many others might not come and talk to you, and you are glad they did! There are many ways to acknowledge another person, whether a parent, child, leader, or colleague:

- Acknowledge a person’s feelings.
- Acknowledge a person’s situation or reality.
- Acknowledge a person’s positive intention or their lack of negative intention.
- Take responsibility for anything you may have done to contribute to the problem.

17. Value and invest in open communication. Realize how important effective communication is in your life. “It’s about the relationships.” Effective communication is a strong part of being an effective leader, follower, spouse, parent, and citizen. Be a student of communication; learn about your communication styles and weaknesses, learn strategies to improve your communication, and then work to implement what you learn into your day-to-day communication strategies.

Communication is like a sewer...what you get out of it depends on what you put into it.

## Habit #8 – is forever – lifelong habits!

*"Be observing constantly. Stay open minded. Be eager to learn and improve." – John Wooden*

*Commit yourself to lifelong learning. The most valuable asset you'll ever have is your mind and what you put into it.--Brian Tracy*

### Lifelong Learning

If you lay the number 8 on its side, you get the infinity sign = forever. The eighth habit is all about the things to do forever – to ensure continuous improvement and growth.

Do you want to have a long life? Do you want to keep your wits if you have the fortune to see old age? Would you like to avoid the mental decline that can accompany old age? We know that people who keep learning as they get older live longer. We know that lifelong learners retain their wit in old age. Lifelong learners have less occurrence of Alzheimer's disease. Lifelong learners live longer and live smarter than those who do not intentionally strive for continuous learning.

We're planning on living FOREVER! So far, so good!

Highly-effective leaders are lifelong learners. They embrace new learning and change as a means to progress towards the way they want the program to feel like, to look like and to be like in the future. They create useful learning experiences and provide clear and compelling opportunities for everyone to benefit from what they learn. They create programs where together everyone codetermines a well-defined future that is consistent with their shared beliefs and values through a process of shared knowledge, information, power, and control.

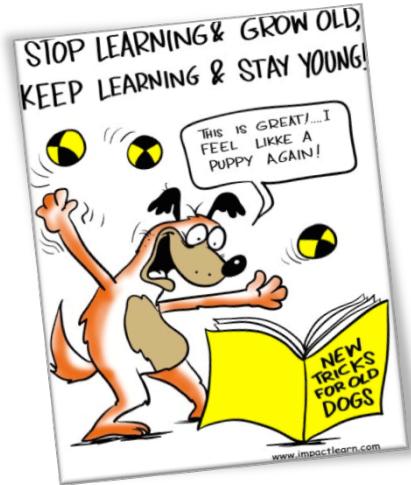
Highly-effective embrace the acquisition of insight and knowledge - forever. This perspective empowers them to take an active role in creating the future. Through paradigm-breaking imagination and innovation, they learn new things and align new systems in order to produce the world they live in and the future world that is to come.

Highly-effective leadership is not learned; effective leadership is learning. A highly-effective afterschool leader is a teacher, mentor, coach, and a facilitator of learning. The key for leaders is to provide useful learning experiences for themselves and their followers and to establish clear and compelling ways for the program to benefit from what everyone learn. The most important and most essential trait of a leader is to be a lifetime learner and the lead learner of program.

We have coined the phrase "sponginess" when looking for new leaders. We would rather hire a person who may be very "green" but extremely willing to learn and train him or her to have the "how to do it" skills than hire an "old dog" who "knows everything there is to know about this field."

When we interview someone who has less experience and knowledge than we desire, we typically say, "Okay, she lacks some of the skills we want, but is she spongy?" The most important trait for us is the ability to learn. Is she an "old dog" that shows resistance to learning new tricks or is she like a sponge, greedy to soak up and apply new information?

Continuous learning is an expectation and affords all leaders with endless opportunities to be proactive rather than reactive. Are you a lifelong learner? If not, commit to become one today.



## Sharpen the Saw

*He that would perfect his work must first sharpen his tools. —Confucius*

“Sharpen the Saw” is the seventh of Stephen Covey’s *Seven Habits of Highly Effective People*. He introduces the habit with the following metaphor.

“Suppose you were to come upon someone in the woods working feverishly to saw down a tree.”

“What are you doing?” you ask.

“Can’t you see?” comes the impatient reply.  
“I’m sawing down this tree.”

“You look exhausted!” you exclaim. “How long have you been at it?”

“Over five hours,” he returns, “and I’m beat!  
This is hard work.”

“Well why don’t you take a break for a few minutes and sharpen that saw?” you inquire.  
“I’m sure it would go a lot faster.”

“I don’t have time to sharpen the saw,” the man says emphatically. “I’m too busy sawing!”  
(2004, p. 287).



It is important to sharpen your personal and professional saws. Sharpening the saw can include opportunities for spiritual, physical, emotional, and intellectual growth. It can include eating well, exercising, and resting. It can include smiling laughing, making meaningful connections with others. It can include learning a new skill, reading, writing, and teaching. It can include enjoying nature, meditating, appreciating art or music, praying, or serving others.

It can include making time for relaxation and reflection. It can include making time for learning and reading for pleasure. It can include learning a new hobby or joining a club. It can include writing in a journal. It can include setting some new goals or updating your old goals. It can include clearing out a bunch of little tasks you have been putting off. It can include organizing your home or office. It can include a little romance – go out on a date.

You can only be a highly-effective afterschool leader if you take the time to sharpen your saw. Take time to have some fun. Take time to play. You deserve it!

### Discussion Questions:

1. What is on your reading list? What afterschool/education blogs do you follow? What class are you taking? In what ways are you learning how to be better at your craft?
2. What are some things YOU can do to sharpen YOUR saw?
3. What habits of highly-effective afterschool leaders are your innate strengths?
4. What habits need some work and attention?