

# Habits 3, 4 & 5

By Suze Hargraves

Today is Part Two of a series based on Steven R. Covey's 7 Habits of Highly Effective People. We're exploring ways to make better choices by thinking differently about personal health and having a plan that's based on common sense, personal control and personal responsibility. Last week we dealt with Habit 1: Be proactive and Habit 2: Begin with the End in Mind. This week we're looking at Habit 2: Put First Things First, Habit 4: Think Win/Win and Habit 5: Seek First to Understand, Then to be Understood. Yeah, number five sounds a little Zen to me too, but let's work with it.

## Habit 3: Put First Things First

The biggest challenge most people have with Habit 3 is figuring out what's first. Actually it's not "what" is first. It's "who". Let's get this straight; if you don't take care of yourself you won't be able to take care of the ones you love, the place you live, the job you work or anything else. Putting yourself first means making healthy choices that are for and solely about you. These choices should not be dependent on anyone but you. Take thirty minutes a day and get some exercise. You don't need anyone's permission or even company. Meditate. Make yourself a healthy meal even if nobody else is interested. Set the example by putting your own health first and knowing that everyone you love and all the things you take care of will benefit from that decision.

## Habit 4: Think Win/Win

Thinking of your health in terms of Win/Win is just that: a winning formula. The more you incorporate good health habits into everyday life, the more effective you are in all the things you have to do daily. Everyone wins. On the opposite side, those bad decisions, like eating a bag of chips for dinner, may not seem too damaging at the time, but in the long run, decisions like that will decidedly effect your win/win formula. You'll get heavier. You'll be at higher risk for major health complications. You won't have the energy to keep up with kids, pets, jobs or pretty much anything else. Everyone loses. Incorporate win/win logic into your long term thinking.

## Habit 5: Seek First to Understand, Then to Be Understood

Ever sit around a table and get an unexpected lecture about what's on your plate? It's annoying and stressful isn't it? What that person is doing is trying to make you understand something when at that particular moment you could care less. They're wasting hot air and you're getting really annoyed. The only thing you're absorbing from it all is the fact that you could really use an aspirin. When this happens settle down and find out why this person is lecturing you. Generally they'll say something about it being in your own best interest. Now it's your turn. Politely tell them that you're working a long term plan with your healthcare team and, although you appreciate their concern, things are well under control and moving along well. Don't switch roles and start to lecture everyone in sight on your new healthy habits either. You can't shove a healthy lifestyle down anyone's throat. Remember: listen and respond but never respond without listening.

Stay tuned next week for Habit 6 and 7! It's all about synergizing and sharpening tools.

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