

## 10 THINGS LEADERS DO TO BE MORE EFFECTIVE

By Lynnea Hagen, MS, CDC

### 1. Practice Extreme Self-Care.

In its simplest form, extreme self-care means taking exceptional care of yourself even before you care for others. You're no good to others, or to the world if you let yourself become fatigued or ill. This means seeing that you're getting enough sleep, healthy food, plenty of exercise.

Take care of your needs.

This goes way beyond basic human needs of food, water, companionship and shelter. There are numerous other needs that are individual and "sacred", for example, respect, security, prestige, inner harmony, freedom, being heard. Make sure all of your needs are met. Then make sure that others in your life honor all of your needs.

Create 10 delightful daily habits.

These 10 habits will help you with your extreme self-care. List 10 habits you'll do each and every day that you find delightful. Some examples of delightful habits are listening to beautiful music, writing in your journal, reading the comics, singing your favorite song, eating well...you decide. Write them down and do them every day.

### 2. Get Rid of Stuff You Don't Need

Too much stuff and too much clutter make it hard for us to see what we have. Clutter is a huge energy drain. Our eyes see it, our hands or feet have to maneuver through or past it, our brains try to process all the extra stimulation....and somewhere inside us, we know we need to deal with it! If you don't need it, recycle, donate, or toss it. Some exceptions are allowed, but be ruthless. I have all my clients start by getting rid of a pocket of clutter. It's amazingly freeing, energizing, and empowering. Also, if you want to more effective, clean off your desk at the end of each day.

### 3. Get Rid of Commitments You Have Outgrown

You know the ones I'm talking about - the ones where you cringed when you agreed to take them on. Find a good time to stop one of these commitments, then do it. Consider if these things are a good use of your time; or is the dread causing an inner churn that is draining you? Whatever you're involved in can truly get along without you. It could be that your filling a need or space is preventing someone else from being involved, or growing into their own leadership role. There's a season for everyone and everything, including our interests and involvements. Move on if it's time.

#### **4. Be Clear On What You Want For Your Life**

This might be the toughest one on the list but it's the most important. Write down the things you want for your life. If they're material items such as a house or a new car, ask yourself what it is that these possessions represent to you. Is it security, prestige, or something else? From this, you can start creating a compelling vision, probably the greatest step to staying focused and passionate about what you're doing, and a "must" if you're serious about getting all you want out of life.

Why does vision matter? As business coach Richard Reardon states, "Without vision, people get bored, go around in circles, lose energy, worry a lot, and look back more than forward. We all need a reason to go through the day with zest. Vision provides that reason." And I want to add-- while formulating your vision, factor in what sort of legacy you want to leave: for your family, for your colleagues, for your company, your community, and for the world.

#### **5. Get Organized**

If you've gotten rid of stuff you don't need, this step will be much easier. You'll gain a lot of time if you're not constantly searching for things. Create an organizational scheme that works for you. Hire a professional organizer if you're not sure how.

#### **6. Tolerate Nothing.**

Start by making a list of 25 things that you're tolerating - a dirty car, a squeaky door, a picture that won't hang straight. Then pick the 10 easiest ones to take care of and fix them now. Believe it or not, these tolerations are bothering you more than you know, and draw your focus away from your desired path. Notice what happens and how you feel when you take care of the first ten. Keep working on your list, adding to it as you notice more "little irritations" in every area of your life.

Tolerations include boundaries, and boundaries are defined very personally by you as: (For example: yell at me, consistently show up late for our appointments, interrupting me when I am speaking, keep me waiting for more than 20 minutes). If you can't get work done because of interruptions, then create a boundary that states, "People can't interrupt me between such-and-such hours." Then make sure that you, and others, honor that time. (I have a terrific communications script to use when someone tramples on a boundary. This tool works well with anyone who is overstepping your boundaries or disrespecting your needs--co-workers, vendors, children--and keeps emotions out of it. Contact me if you would like some a quick training in this.

#### **7. Plan, Then Plan Some More**

Plan Your Journey.

I work with business owners and professionals to get them to the next level in their business and/or their life. Often times they bring me in because they feel "stuck" or frustrated with their progress...and for good reason! 80% of the time they have no vision or plan for where they want to go. Most people spend more time planning their

vacation than they do planning their future. Many are afraid of creating a strategic business or life plan, fearing that they will feel “locked in”, or will lose their flexibility for change. I explain that having a detailed, strategic, inspiring plan is actually freeing—it allows you to get thoughts, opportunities, visions, goals, and projects out of your mind and onto paper. This process actually frees up creativity in our minds and allows us to be more open to opportunities AND threats that cross our path.

Additionally, it’s been proven that the most successful people write down their visions, goals, timelines, and strategies...as a result, their timeline moves faster than they had projected. When I have finished working with a client to define these things (usually by helping them create a One Page Business Plan), invariably, they feel a greater sense of control, power, success, and even joy! They feel that they are on their way, with a greater possibility of attaining their dreams.

Plan Your Time.

I once told a client who is a strong Christian, “Make your daily planner your second Bible.” Spend time with it either at the end of your day or as your day begins. Use it to prioritize your “to-do’s” before you go to your desk to do them. Map out, hour by hour, where you will be putting your efforts, including slots of time for unexpected events, AND time for yourself--to take breaks, or a brisk walk around the block (see Extreme Self Care, above). Take ½ hour at the beginning of the week (I like using Sunday night) to plan the week ahead. It’s been shown that 1 minute of planning saves 9 minutes of chaos. Do the math. Planning is one of the most effective tools available to you---and it’s free!

## **8. Leave Nothing Unsaid**

It would be wonderful if others would know what we want without having to be told. However, the human race hasn’t evolved to this point. But often, we’ll feel frustrated, hurt or resentful because we don’t get what we need or want from others. There are three areas in which we need to make sure nothing is left unsaid:

- 1.) Tell others what you need from them
- 2.) Tell others how they can please you
- 3.) Tell others when they have done something well. These may seem obvious, but they’re often overlooked in our dealings with others.

You may ask what number three has to do with our personal effectiveness. Speaking positively to another person elevates the “feel good” chemicals in our own brains (e.g.: serotonin levels increase). These same chemicals are elevated in the people receiving the praise, and in the people observing this interaction (the “third person effect”). When people feel positive, or are thinking positive thoughts, they are more effective, more efficient, and are more open to seeing possibilities in their path.

## **9. Celebrate!**

This is important. Celebrate your successes all the time. Find great ways to appreciate yourself for everything you do. Give yourself a pat on the back or buy yourself a present. Little celebrations, or

“attaboys”, help us see and appreciate our efforts and affirm the progress we’ve made. It raises the “feel good” chemicals in our brains.

#### **10. Stop Doing “The Put-Offs”**

Are there duties at home or in your business that you keep putting off because you they’re just too distasteful to you? Why keep pushing yourself to do the things that you hate, or are, quite frankly, not gifted to do? Often we’ll berate ourselves because we “should” be doing something easily, well, or happily. Quit “shoulding” all over yourself! Talk to people in your home or office who don’t mind doing those things. They probably hate doing something that you don’t mind doing, so why not arrange a “duty switch” with them, and save both your sanities? Maybe you can split the “duty” into sub-duties, and you each take the part(s) you dislike the least. Or, do a trade of professional services. It’s a waste of your mental health, effectiveness, and time to keep suffering from things that drag you down.

#### **11. (Bonus tip!) Laugh often.**

I hope that laughing made it on your list of 10 delightful habits but just in case it didn't, I included it here. Laughing makes us feel good, brings health benefits, and makes the world look brighter. Create a laugh list - a list of things that make you laugh - and use it when you need a laugh. When you boot up your computer, have your favorite daily cartoons on the home page, talk to a funny friend, keep a book of Calvin & Hobbs cartoons at your desk. If there’s something that always makes you smile, bring that into your mind when you find yourself going down the “path of frowns”. You’ll find that you’ll be much more effective...and you’ll probably attract more positive and supportive people, too!