

**TIP #48 – JANUARY 2011
NEW YEAR – NEW YOU
CONTRIBUTED BY BETH HIGH**

With each New Year it seems we get a free pass to do things differently, to create a new version of ourselves. On January 1, we get our annual ‘do-over’. While the notion of turning over a new leaf is very appealing, who said it has to happen only once a year? What if that opportunity were available to us more often than that?

Jim Kouzes and Barry Posner tell us that "Leadership is in the moment." And there is plenty of evidence that shows us these moments happen with both frequency and consistency. For example, Gloria Mark at UC-Irvine suggests that we are presented with such ‘do-over’ moments every 3.05 minutes! That's how often we are interrupted by someone during a typical 8-hour workday.

Truly mindful leaders will recognize each of these moments as an opportunity to be fully present, to react and respond according to their own values and the values of those with whom they interact. They will seize the opportunity to be "in the moment" and demonstrate a leadership behavior that will enhance their relationship with another person.

Learning to take advantage of these special occasions takes practice. As a coach, facilitator, teacher, or leader, if you are working to fully develop The Five Practices, this is fertile ground. There are many approaches you might take to help shift leaders’ thinking, using the "every 3.05 minutes" metric. For example, you could ask leaders to:

- Track the interruptions they encounter on any given day and to think about their response. Did they take the opportunity to help define the relationship they have with the other person?
- At the end of a day, reflect on the day’s events and identify a single moment that they either hit or missed. Encourage them to find an opportunity to bring their ‘do-over’ moment back to their team, direct reports, or some other larger group for shared learning.

Another more in-depth approach would be to ask leaders to identify a specific relationship they would like to strengthen—one in which they would like to engage more fully. Focus on that relationship for a specific length of time (e.g., a week, a month, or whatever seems appropriate). Track the moments made available to influence that relationship. And help leaders see that they may be as often as every 3.05 minutes.

Through coaching or peer reflection, leaders can make it an everyday practice to act and reflect on the opportunities available to them to make a difference, to do things differently. Whether the moments are grabbed or missed, over time leaders may recognize that the "fresh slate" that we so often associate with the New Year and our resolve to change comes much more often than we realize. And each moment offers a unique opportunity to lead.

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