Habit 4: Think Win-Win - Have an everyone can win attitude

Think Win-Win is an attitude toward life, a mental frame of mind that says I can win, and so can you. It’s not me or you, it’s both of us. Think Win-Win is the foundation of getting along well with other people. It begins with the belief that we are all equal, that no one is inferior or superior to anyone else, and no one really needs to be. The best way to understand Win-Win is to first see what Win-Win is not. Win-Win is not Win-Lose, Lose-Win, or Lose-Lose. These are all common but poor attitudes toward life.

**Win-Lose (The Totem Pole)** - Win-Lose is an attitude toward life that says the pie of success is only so big, and if you get a big piece there is less for me. So I’m going to make sure I get my slice first or that I get a bigger piece than you. Win-Lose is competitive. Win Lose is full of pride. In the words of C.S. Lewis, “Pride gets no pleasure out of having something, only out of having more of it than the next man… It is the comparison that makes you proud, the pleasure of being above the rest.”

A Win-Lose attitude wears many faces. The following are some of them:

- Using other people, emotionally or physically, for your own selfish purposes.
- Spreading rumors about someone else (as if putting someone else down builds you up).
- Always insisting on getting your way without concerning yourself with the feelings of others.
- Becoming jealous and envious when something good happens to someone close to you.

**Lose-Win (The Doormat)** - One teen wrote, “I, for one, am a big peacemaker. I would much rather take the blame for just about anything than get into an argument. I constantly find myself saying that I am dumb…” Do you find yourself identifying with this statement? If so, you have fallen into the trap of Lose-Win. Lose-Win looks prettier on the surface, but it’s just as dangerous as Win-Lose. It’s the doormat syndrome. Lose-Win says, “Have your way with me. Wipe your feet on me. Everyone else does.” With a Lose-Win attitude you’ll find yourself setting low expectations and compromising your standards again and again. Giving into peer pressure is Lose-Win. Perhaps you don’t want to ditch school, but the group wants you to. So you give in. What happened? Well, you lost and they won. That’s called Lose-Win.

**Lose-Lose (The Downward Spiral)** - Lose-Lose says, “If I’m going down, then you’re going with me.” “I don’t care what happens to me, as long as my brother fails.” “If I can’t have Jeff, I’m sure as heck not going to let my friend Sarah have him.” Lose-Lose is usually what happens when two Win-Lose people get together. If you want to win at all costs, you’re both going to end up losing.

**Win-Win (The All You Can Eat Buffet)** - Win-Win is the belief that everyone can win. It’s both nice and tough all at once. I won’t step on you, but I won’t be your doormat either. You care about other people and you want them to succeed. But you also care about yourself, and you want to succeed as well. Win-Win is abundant. It is the belief that there’s plenty of success to go around. It’s not either you or me. It’s both of us.

The following are all examples of the Win-Win attitude:
- You were just elected to an important school office position and make up your mind not to develop a “superiority complex.” You treat everyone the same, including the friendless and the unpopular.
- Your best friend just got accepted at the college you wanted to get into. You didn’t make it. Although you feel terrible about your own situation, you are genuinely happy for your friend.
- You want to go out for dinner. Your friend wants to see a movie. You jointly decide to rent a movie and pick up food to eat at home.

Reflection:

- Pinpoint the areas of your life where you most struggle with comparisons. Perhaps it’s with others, physical features, friends, or talents.
- If you play sports, show sportsmanship. Compliment someone from the opposing team after the game.
- Do you have an important test coming up soon? If so, form a study group and share your best ideas with each other. You’ll all do better.
- The next time someone close to you succeeds, be genuinely happy for them instead of feeling threatened.
- Think of a person who you feel is a model of Win-Win. What is it about this person you admire?
- What are five ways I can apply Win-Win thinking in my relationships?