

Lean Leadership for Happier Holidays at Home | 019

Welcome to Lean Leadership for Ops Managers, the podcast for leaders in Ops Management who want to spark improvement, foster engagement, and boost problem solving - AND still get their day job done. Here's your host, Leadership Trainer, Lean Enthusiast, and Spy Thriller Junkie, Jamie V. Parker.

Hey, Ops Leaders. You hear me say leadership is a relationship. Know what that means? It means some of the things you do to be a good leader can also serve you well in your personal relationships, especially when we're home for the holidays. Kids are out of school, lots of people are working from home, that Wi-Fi is getting stretched. With a pandemic, some of your normal outings aren't safe, and you might be spending even more time cooped up together. And in all the extras that happen during the holidays, you just might find that people are getting a little short and snappy with each other. So here's what I want you to do. I want you to use reinforcing feedback to make happier holidays at home.

On today's episode, I'm going to give you a review of reinforcing feedback and examples of it in the workplace. Then we'll talk about our personal relationships and how we can apply it at home. And finally, I'll leave you with your next step.

Okay, review time.

Reinforcing feedback is when you recognize helpful behaviors. And typically, in leadership, we're purposeful about giving reinforcing feedback on the healthful behaviors that you want to see repeated, that you want more of. So for this exercise, when we get into the applying it at home, don't worry about the "that you want to see more of" part, we're going to let that go for just this application. But I do want you to make a concerted effort to recognize helpful behaviors.

Now, if you go back to episode five, I dig into the problem with recognition. We talked about what we do wrong and how we need to fix it. And I encourage you to go back and check out episode five, and really that whole series - episodes five through eight - all about this topic.

As a quick reminder, though, there are two important pieces that need to be included in reinforcing feedback. You remember what they are? Well, as a refresher, the first is specific behavior. So not things like ownership or responsibility or initiative. The actual behaviors, what do those things mean? What do you see? And what do you hear? And the second important component is the impact of the behavior, the positive benefit, the so what, though, why it matters.

So, at work, we might give reinforcing feedback like this. "Hey, John, thank you for raising problems in our shift huddle. It helps others see that it's safe for them to raise problems too. Appreciate it." So the specific behavior? Raising problems in shift huddles. The impact of the behaviors is that it shows others it's safe for them to raise problems too.

Lean Leadership for Happier Holidays at Home | 019

All right, let's do another example. "Hey, Rachel, thanks for putting tools back where they go as you're finished using them. It makes sure that tools are available for others and shows our core value of respect. Thank you." What's the specific behavior? Putting those tools back as you finish with them, right? Putting them back where they go. What's the impact? That the tools are available for others and that demonstrates our core values in action. So you get the hang of this, right? You can understand this at work.

What does this have to do with happier holidays at home? Well, I want you to do this at home, too. Now, don't worry about it being formalized or being aligned with your family purpose and values, but do it. In fact, I don't just want you to do it. I want you to specifically go on a treasure hunt looking for opportunities to recognize helpful behaviors or contributions. Because people in your household are probably picking up some slack or taking on some responsibilities or doing helpful things that you're not even paying attention to.

Have you seen the meme floating around? It's a holiday meme. And it has mom Yoda holding a cup of coffee and it says, "Every mom watching you open presents Christmas morning." And then it has a dad Yoda with a wide-eyed, mouth agape, surprised look on his face and it says, "Every dad just as surprised as you are", right? It's funny because it's true. I mean, I know it's not universally true. I know that it's not 100% applicable but it happens in a lot of families. It definitely was my mom and dad, I guarantee you. And the reason I've seen it shared dozens of times, it's constantly on my feed being shared by different people, different people, different people, is because it's true in other families too.

Now look, it may not be Christmas present shopping or wrapping, maybe it's other stuff. But your partner or your kids or your parents or your roommates or your family or friends are probably doing things during the holidays that are helpful. And they don't have to be big, extra, over the top things. They can be small things. So be on the lookout for them, and give reinforcing feedback, recognize them, share appreciation for those contributions, for those actions.

So, "Hey, thank you for washing all the guest bedroom linens. I know it will feel great for my parents to crawl into freshly washed sheets when they visit for the holidays. Appreciate it."

"You know what? Thank you for taking care of dinner tonight. It takes one thing off of my plate so I can take care of the holiday tasks on my to-do list. I appreciate you."

"Thank you for taking out trash without being asked. It shows me that you're helping out with household chores as a member of our family. Keep it up." "

"Thank you for hanging the Christmas lights. It really makes the kids so excited to go out and see the lights each night. Thank you."

Lean Leadership for Happier Holidays at Home | 019

“Thank you for taking initiative to buy milk and cookies ahead of time. It's great that we're sharing responsibility for making Christmas Eve and Christmas morning traditions with the kids. I appreciate you.”

And it doesn't have to be just Christmas. Whatever holiday you may celebrate, whatever traditions you may have, and even if you don't celebrate any, the reality is this time of the year can be a little more stressful, there could be a little more to do, particularly in a pandemic, when you have to come up with new ideas, when you can't go visit the family, visit the grandparents the way you were planning on or whatever else it is. You get this. Reinforcing feedback. It's when we recognize the helpful behaviors or contributions that others are making. And you want to remember the two important parts to include - the specific behavior, and the positive impact of that behavior.

And, of course, your favorite part of the podcast. Your next step.

I want you to go out and look for things to recognize at home during the holidays.

It's a scavenger hunt, seek them out.

Too many of these efforts are hidden like that meme. We start to take them for granted, we don't even realize they're happening. So make an effort to find them and then share your appreciation. Give reinforcing feedback or recognition or appreciation, whatever you want to call it. Once you find it, say it. Say thank you.

And remember to share what it is you're saying thank you for and how that contributes, why it matters. Because here's what's going to happen. It will lift the mood. It will help people feel valued. It will help your kids understand what those helpful things are that they can do more of. It will ward off some of that snappiness that could happen when people are a little more stressed than usual. And finally, on next week's episode, I have a gift for you. So be sure to tune in to get all of the details.

We are in a season of giving. So I encourage you to think about who in your network might benefit from this podcast and give them the gift of development by sending them a link to your favorite episodes or just to the podcast in general. That link is [processedplusresults.com/podcast](https://www.ProcessPlusResults.com/podcast). And I wish you, your families, and your team all the best this holiday season.