



Time to Get ‘Smoving’

By Jim Nagel, Senior Director of Member Services, and Krista Grueninger, Director of Communications



Sam Parker

Sam Parker is not just an author and a publisher. He’s also a smover. He likes to smile and he likes to move (smove).

This doesn’t mean that he is constantly in motion with a big grin plastered on his face. *Smile & Move* is Parker’s latest book as well as a group of nine fundamentals that remind people to be happy (smile) and do something (move). It’s a perfect combination for Optimist volunteers who strive for a positive outlook on life while serving others.

“I thought it was important to shine a light on what it meant to have a positive attitude and actually take action, not only working on the attitude but also on the action side,” Parker says.

Rewinding Slightly

While *Smile & Move* is Parker’s latest effort, his determination to improve work habits and relationships didn’t start here. First, he headed for the boiling point. Parker’s first book, *212°: The Extra Degree*, was based on the idea that at 211 degrees, water is hot. But at 212 degrees, water boils. That’s when things start to really happen, and one degree makes all the difference.

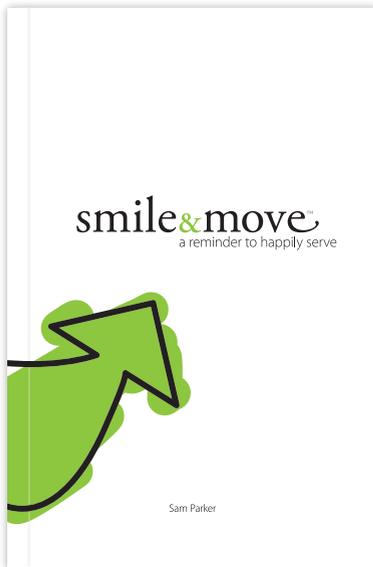
Those who prefer sports to science can think about how, in many sports, an incredibly small measurement of time or distance is the difference between first and second place – and huge winnings or significantly smaller rewards. “Small differences can have an exponential impact on results,” Parker says. One doesn’t have to look further than swimming, horse racing, the PGA TOUR or NASCAR to understand. This idea of giving a little more or trying just a bit harder evolved into the book *212°*.

Parker’s next book, *Smile & Move*, pushed even further and actually came out of watching his daughter and his niece run a lemonade stand several years ago. They were about 12 or 13 at the time and they set up the stand to raise money for a cause. They might have been working toward a good goal, but they were apathetic and were not approaching their customers in a good way.

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I wonder what that actually means.”

“I went on a bit of a dad rant,” Parker says, “and at the end of the rant, I ended up saying, ‘What you need to do, girls, is you need to smile and you need to move, you need to smile and move.’ And I thought, ‘Wow, that’s a catchy phrase. I wonder what that actually means.’”

He brought that question to people in his office and they began expanding on the concept, eventually developing five ways to smile and four ways to move.



Five Ways to Smile

The five ways to smile include:

1. Waking up and being engaged with and attentive to the people in front of us
2. Being thankful for the opportunities we have to serve others
3. Being approachable to others and knowing that contact is where it starts
4. Complaining less
5. Physically smiling to the point where our eyes brighten

Parker has observed the effects of the ways to smile in his personal life and in his office.

In his own life, Parker has gone on a “device diet” recently to be truly present to those around him. He believes society has become “Berry rude,” as people constantly look down at their phone while they’re talking to you.

There are of course benefits to cell phones and some amazing developments have come out of the internet, but everything has its limits. While he advocates Twitter and Facebook as broadcast mechanisms and ways to get the word out to large groups, people should not mistake followers and friends as people with whom they have actual relationships.

“Make sure you’re using them in a valuable way and not losing sight of the fact that to live is to live with the people who are around you and work with the people around you,” Parker says.

A while back, Parker saw a “smile” experiment in his own office. Instant messaging had become a staple and he noticed that the office had become quiet – disturbingly quiet.

“It was so quiet and it didn’t feel right,” he says. “Nobody was getting out of their chairs and talking to one another.”

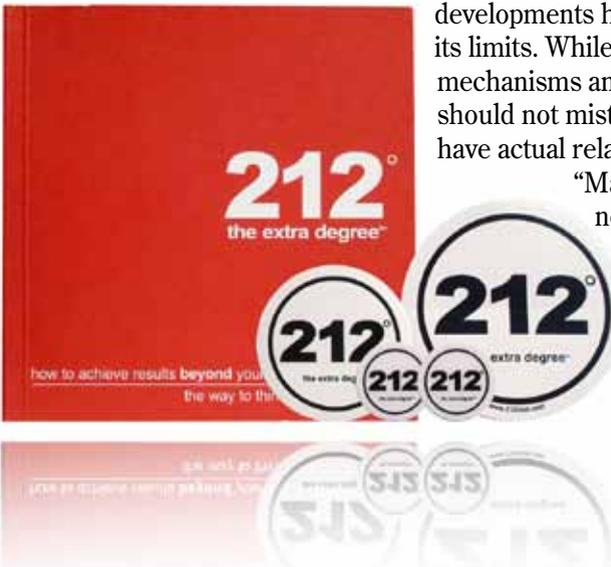
They eliminated instant messaging and he watched

the staff begin to re-engage. “I saw people starting to care more about each other,” he says. “And I think the nuances of interpersonal communication, face-to-face communication, allowed people to be more effective because you can pick up facial clues and body clues.”

As people rely more and more on technology, he has observed an inability to communicate in person. It’s something he has observed hiring staff right out of college, but he is also addressing it in his own household. Flash forward several years, and the daughter at the lemonade stand is now 15. When Parker asks who she actually speaks to on her cell phone, she admits only Parker, her mom and a couple of close friends. For everyone else, it’s just used for texting.

“Half the time I’ll jokingly tell her, ‘Hey, call that person instead of texting them and see what kind of response you get,’” Parker says. “It’s funny how people will not even pick up the phone anymore.”

Getting back to true personal interaction will lead to that fifth and very important element of smiling. Because to smile so that your eyes truly brighten, you have to be right in front of someone, actually communicating in a genuine way.





Four Ways to Move

Once a person is truly smiling, it's time to move. The four ways to move include:

1. Starting early and working long occasionally
2. Exceeding expectations rather than just meeting them
3. Having a sense of urgency in efforts for others
4. Being resourceful and resilient in getting the results

"I get concerned that we're not being accountable to one another the way we need to be in order to make the world a better place, and that's kind of everybody's role, isn't it?" Parker says.

He reiterates a quote by Bob Thurman, the first American to be ordained a Tibetan Buddhist monk but more recognizable to many as the father of actress Uma Thurman. Bob Thurman once said, "Generosity is more fun. That's the key."

He's not the first to say something like this. There are quotes from wise and respected individuals throughout history stating that living without service to others is not truly living. Many Optimists are quite generous with their time, but now they must pass this desire to serve along to younger generations.

Parker has seen people get away from generosity and move toward a more "what's in it for me" attitude. People are working less but they're expecting more. Part of it is generational and part of it is technological.

Some of it comes from parenting. "Parents aren't holding themselves accountable to the difficult conversations and the difficult situations that they have to have with their children ... and that sends a whole generation of people who are entitled into the world, who are coming out of college who all expect to be served rather than serve," Parker says.

But entitlement issues don't start and stop there. The media also has a hand.

"The media tells us it's all about us," Parker says. "I deserve this, I deserve that. And we're all into sound bites and our attention spans are becoming smaller and smaller."

Looking once again to his own life, he sees his daughter and her friends, who can't make it through one song on their iPods before switching to another song. Parker points out that they don't know a world where switching songs required picking up the arm on a record player or fast forwarding a tape. To them, things have always been immediately available.

"They can get anything instantaneously for almost nothing or for free from the web," he says. "It's a wonderful thing but it's also setting expectations that everything's free, that nothing requires work."

Parker is the first to admit that he did not come to these revelations without once being there himself.

"I was that entitled kid at many times in my life, too," he says. "If I can help somebody get to a more mature level of understanding faster than I did, then I've done my job."

These days, people are working far less than generations past. People owe it to those who came before them to work harder and pass along the importance of service to the younger generations. That's what it means to move.

"I hope people can see that life is more about giving than it is about taking," Parker says. "And the sooner you realize that, the sooner you'll find a peace or a calmness to your life and you'll enjoy it much more."

More information about Smile & Move, including video footage, is available at www.smileandmove.com.



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