

## Hide and Seek

**Category** General Series **Date** April 20, 2009

When you hear the phrase “hide and seek,” you probably think of the game—or a variation of the game—that children play everyday all across the world. As a child I recall running off and finding a seemingly nice hiding place, only to be exposed by an astute play pal. And when I was found, I willingly gave up and acknowledged being outwitted. Occasionally I would be the one engaged in seeking those in hiding. In these situations I usually was very focused and determined to outsmart my friends, or at the very least match their level of wit—all in fun!

As grown mature adults, at every level and quarter of society, this game—hide and seek—is still in play. And almost always it is to the detriment of our self-respect or the respect (from others) that we have gained. Unlike the child’s play, the tools of “hide and seek” with many adults are *criticism* and *accountability*.

In many situations in life you make choices or you exercise judgment of sorts. And often these choices and judgment carry significant consequences. At home, within a family setting, a choice or a decision you make may negatively impact your spouse, children, parent, or sibling; in a work environment, a decision on your part may carry adverse consequences if you have misused a privilege or abused a position of authority; and in a social circle an action you choose may impact many of your friends and peers in an unexpected way. In each of these and other scenarios, the seekers often emerge—those determined to hold you accountable for your actions, rightly and justly so. *Accountability* is one of the two tools employed in this psychological game of “hide and seek.”

But what often happens when a seeker exposes you, revealing the adverse consequences of your action? Many of us hide behind a veil of criticism. We perceive the method of accountability employed by the seeker as a personal attack on us. We go on the defensive, lose sight of the essence of what the seeker is rightfully trying to do, and issue an accusation of a ploy or of unfairness. We justify an unnecessary call to accountability by building a wall of accusation of criticism and comfortably hiding behind this wall.

**Hide and Seek**  
**Criticism and Accountability – two tools employed in the psychological game of hide and seek.**

In the child’s play when the seeker finds you, the game is over—you give up, admit your exposure, and move on. But as adults we often don’t want to give up. We don’t want to face the facts, we don’t want to admit wrong, we suddenly lack the courage to act responsibly, and we elect to run and hide. And in the process we lose our self-respect, or lose the respect of others that we have worked so hard to gain.

The interesting question then becomes — Why does this psychological game of hide and seek often lead to a loss of respect? Because the outcome of the “game” exposes your true character—your true nature and aspects of you that take time for others to get to know. When your true character begins to be exposed, it will influence the way other people

perceive you and ultimately value you. This concept is integrated within the fundamental principles of respect and I explore it quite thoroughly in my forthcoming book series, *The Top Ten Laws of Respect*.

So the next time you find yourself in a situation, at home or work or with friends, and you are challenged or called to account for your actions, consider the ramification of your response. Your best strategy will be to forego the age-old game of hide and seek—leave that to the enjoyment of children. As an adult your true character will unfold before the eyes of others slowly and gradually with every conscious and sub-conscious decision to engage in this psychological game.

## About the Author



Niyi Taiwo is the founder of EKTIMIS and the lead editor for the EKTIMIS eLibrary articles. He is the author of several books, including the EKTIMIS Top Ten Laws series. He is a continuous improvement expert with over 21 years of industry experience – operational, management and consulting. He holds an undergraduate degree from WPI and a master's degree from RPI. He is a certified Lean Expert and an ASQ-certified Six Sigma Black Belt.