

# **The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People**

**By Stephen R. Covey**

**A Condensed Summary**  
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“Motivation is what gets you started.  
Habit is what keeps you going.”

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# INTRODUCTION

Our character, basically, is a composite of our habits. Because they are consistent, often unconscious patterns, habits constantly express our character and produce our effectiveness - or our ineffectiveness. In the words of Aristotle, "We are what we repeatedly do. Excellence, then, is not an act, but a habit."

I identify here seven habits shared by all truly effective people. Fortunately, for those of us not born effective (no one is), these habits can be learned. Furthermore, the collective experience of the ages shows us that acquiring them will give you the character to succeed.

Some years ago, I decided to read all the 'success' literature published in the United States since its beginning in 1776 - hundreds of books, articles, and essays on self-improvement and popular psychology.

I noticed a startling thing: Almost all the writings that helped build our country in its first 150 years or so identified character as the foundation of success. The literature of what we might call "The Character Ethic" helped us cultivate integrity, humility, fidelity, temperance, courage, justice, patience, industry, and the Golden Rule.

Compared with the early success literature, the writings of the last 50 years seem superficial to me - filled with social image consciousness, techniques, and quick fixes. There, the solutions are not derived from character.

If there isn't deep integrity and fundamental goodness behind what you do, the challenges of life will cause true motives to surface, and human relationship failure will replace short-term success. As Emerson once put it, "What you are shouts so loudly in my ears I cannot hear what you say."

Changing our habits to improve what we are can be a painful process. It must be motivated by a higher purpose, and by the willingness to subordinate what you think you want now for what you know you want later.

As you open the gates of change to give yourself new habits, be patient with yourself. This is not a quick fix. But I assure you that you will see immediate benefits. And if you see the whole picture clearly, you'll have the perseverance to see the process to its conclusion. Have faith -it's worth the effort. Remember what Thomas Paine said: "What we obtain too cheap, we esteem too lightly; 'tis dearness only which gives everything its value. Heaven knows how to put a proper price upon its goods."

Acquiring the seven habits of effectiveness takes us through the stages of character development:

- Habits 1 through 3 make up the “private victory” - where we go from dependence to independence by taking responsibility for our own lives.
- Acquiring habits 4 through 6 is our “public victory”: Once independent, we learn to be interdependent, to succeed with other people.
- The seventh habit makes all the others possible - periodically renewing ourselves in mind, body, and spirit.

# 1. Be Proactive

## Habit One

You won't find it in an ordinary dictionary, but the word is common now in management literature:

*Proactivity means that as human beings, we are responsible for our own lives.*

If we think our lives are a function of our conditions, it is because we have, by conscious decision or by default, chosen to empower those things to have control over us - we have let ourselves become reactive. Reactive people are often affected by the weather, proactive people carry their own weather with them.

Being proactive means recognizing our responsibility to make things happen. The people who end up with the good jobs are those who seize the initiative to do whatever is necessary, consistent with correct principles, to get the job done.

I worked with a group of people in the home-improvement industry. A heavy recession was taking a toll on their business, and they were discouraged as we began the seminar. The first day, we talked about "What's happening to us?" The basic answer was that they were laying off their friends just to survive. The group finished their first day even more discouraged.

The second day, we talked about "What's going to happen in the future?" They concluded things were going to get worse before they improved. They were more depressed than ever.

On the third day, we focused on the proactive question, "What is our response?" In the morning, we brainstormed practical ways of managing better and cutting costs; in the afternoon, we talked about increasing market share. By concentrating on a few do-able things, everyone was able to wrap up the meeting with a new spirit of excitement and hope, eager to get back to work. We all had faced reality, and discovered we had the power to choose a positive response.

You can find a clue to whether you now have the proactive habit by looking at how you speak. Do you find yourself using these expressions?

"That's the way I am." There's nothing I can do about it.

"He makes me so mad!" My emotional life is outside my control.

"I have to do it." I'm not free to choose my own actions.

For all of us, there are many things that concern us that we can't do anything about, for now. But there are also things we can do. Proactive people work on their circle of influence - the people and things they can reach - and spend less

energy on their much wider circle of concern. By keeping their focus on their circle of influence, they actually extend its area.

As you become more proactive, you will make mistakes. While we choose our actions freely, we cannot choose their consequences - which are governed by natural and divine law, out in our circle of concern. The proactive approach to a mistake is to acknowledge it instantly, correct it, and learn from it. To delay, to deny the mistake, is to miss its lesson. "Success," said IBM founder T.J. Watson Sr., "is on the far side of failure."

**Application suggestions:**

- For a full day, listen to your language and the language of people around you and pay attention to how many times you hear the reactive phrase "I have to" or "I can't". Bear in mind that we always have the choice.
- If you stall to think some important problem in your life is "out there" somewhere, stop yourself. That thought is the problem.
- Work only in your smaller circle of influence.

Proactivity is part of human nature and although the proactive muscles may be dormant, they are there. And just like any other muscle, your proactive muscles need exercising.

*You can find further application suggestions in Covey's original book: The 7 habits of highly effective people.*

## 2. Begin with the end in mind

### Habit Two

In your mind's eye, see yourself going to the funeral of a loved one. As you walk into the site, notice the flowers, the soft cries. You see the faces of friends and family; you feel the shared sorrow of losing, the joy of having known.

As you reach the front of the room and look inside the casket, you suddenly come face-to-face with yourself. This is your funeral, three years from now. Take a seat and look down at the program in your hand. The first speaker is from your extended family; the second is a close friend; the third is an acquaintance from your business life; the fourth is from your place of worship or some community-service organization where you've worked.

What character would you like each of these speakers to have seen in you - what difference would you like to have made in their lives?

The second habit of effectiveness is to begin with the end in mind. It means to know where you're going so as to understand where you are now, and take your next step in the right direction.

It's easy to get caught up in an activity trap in the busyness of life, to work harder and harder at climbing the ladder of success only to discover it's leaning against the wrong wall, only to find that our drive to achieve the goal has blinded us to the things that really mattered most and are now gone. We may be very busy, and very efficient by working frenetically and heedlessly, but we will only be truly effective when we consider the end in mind.

### How to use "the end" to become highly effective

Personal Mission Statement. This tool focuses on what you want to be (character) and to do (contributions and achievements) and on the values or principles upon which being and doing are based. Your personal mission statement will reflect your own uniqueness, both in content and form (e.g. Benjamin Franklin's mission statement does not resemble Martin Luther King's either in content or in form).

The following is from my friend Rolfe Kerr's personal mission statement:

*Succeed at home first;  
Seek and merit divine help;  
Remember the people involved;  
Develop one new proficiency a year,  
Hustle while you wait;  
Keep a sense of humour.*



You could call a personal mission statement a sort of written constitution - its power lies in the fact that it's fundamentally changeless. The key to living with change is retaining a sense of who you are and what you value.

Start developing your mission statement, like Kerr's, from a core of principles. I mention this because all of us are drawn away from real effectiveness when we make our centre something other than our principles.

“Thriving on change requires a core of changeless values.”

Being spouse centred might seem natural and proper. But experience tells a different story. Over the years, I have been called on to help many troubled marriages; the complete emotional dependence that goes with being spouse centred often makes both partners so vulnerable to each other's moods that they become resentful.

The self-esteem of someone money centred can't weather the ups and downs of economic life; money-centred people often put aside family or other priorities, assuming everyone will understand that economic demands come first. They don't always, and we can damage our most important relationships by thinking that they do.

Being pleasure centred cheats one of lasting satisfactions. Too much time spent at leisure, on the paths of least resistance, ensure that our mind and spirit become lethargic, and our heart unfulfilled.

We want to centre our lives on correct principles. Unlike other centres based on people and things subject to frequent change, correct principles don't change. We can depend on them.

Your mission statement may take you some weeks to write, from first draft to final form; it's a concise expression of your innermost values and directions. Even then, you will want to review it regularly and make minor changes as the years bring new insights. Be guided by Viktor Frankl, who says we detect rather than invent our mission in life: “Everyone has his own specific vocation in life. Therein he cannot be replaced, nor can his life be repeated.”

Organizations need mission statements. So do families, so that they do not simply lurch from emotional crisis to crisis - but instead know they have principles that will support them. The key is to have each member of the group contribute ideas and words to the final product. That contribution alone generates real commitment.

### **Application suggestions:**

- Dedicate some time into creating a Personal Mission Statement. Remember this tool focuses on what you want to be (character) and to do (contributions and achievements) and on the values or principles upon which being and doing are based.

# 3. Put first things first

## Habit Three

Write down a short answer to the following questions (if you wish you can simply take a mental note here for the moment):

- What one thing could you do (you aren't doing now) that if you did on a regular basis, would make a tremendous positive difference on your personal life?
- What one thing in your business or professional life would bring similar results?

We'll come back to your answers in a short moment. First let's put Habit 3 into perspective. Putting first things first is the practical fulfilment of Habits 1 (Be proactive) and 2 (Begin with the end in mind). After becoming aware of and developing our own proactive nature (Habit 1), we acknowledge our vision of how our life is to unfold and focus on the unique contribution that is ours to make (Habit 2). Once we've resolved these aspects, we then have to manage ourselves effectively in order to create a life congruent to our answers; we enter the realm of effective management.

### Leadership vs. Management

Effective management is putting first things first, while leadership decides what the "first things" are. This is where prioritisation plays an important role.

### Prioritisation

The essence of the best thinking in the area of time management can be captured in a single phrase: "Organize and execute around priorities". Beyond notes and checklists, calendars and appointment books, we add the important idea of prioritisation.

Prioritisation consists of clarifying values and of comparing the relative worth of activities based on their relationship to those values. We can see how proactively acting upon our lives (Habit 1) with vision and meaning (Habit 2) is essential to the effective application of Habit 3.

Although this habit implies focus on setting short, intermediate and long-term goals toward which our time and energy is directed in harmony with our values, it emphasises the importance of allowing opportunities to develop rich relationships, to meet human needs, and the enjoyment of spontaneous moments on a regular basis. The key is not to manage time, but to manage ourselves.

## **Managing ourselves**

As Peter Drucker has pointed out, the expression “time management” is something of a misnomer: We have a constant amount of time, no matter what we do; the challenge we face is to manage ourselves. To be an effective manager of yourself, you must organize and execute around priorities.

“We don’t manage time. We can only manage ourselves.”

Instead of trying to fit all the things of our lives into the time allotted, as many time-management plans do, our focus here is on enhancing relationships and achieving results.

We all face the same dilemma. We are caught between the urgent and the important.

Something urgent requires immediate attention, it’s usually visible, it presses on us, but may not have any bearing on our long-term goals. Important things, on the other hand, have to do with results - they contribute to our mission, our values, our high-priority goals. We react to urgent matters; we often must act to take care of important matters, even as urgent things scream for our attention.

People get “harried” away from their real goals and values by subordinating the important to the urgent; some are beaten up by problems (in quadrants 1 and 2 on the adapted “Time-Management Matrix”<sup>1</sup>) all day, every day. Their only relief is in escaping once in a while to the calm waters of quadrant 4.

To paraphrase Drucker again, effective people don’t solve problems - they pursue opportunities. They feed opportunities and starve problems. They have genuine quadrant 1 emergencies, but by thinking and acting preventively, they keep their number down.

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<sup>1</sup> See figure 1.0 further below.

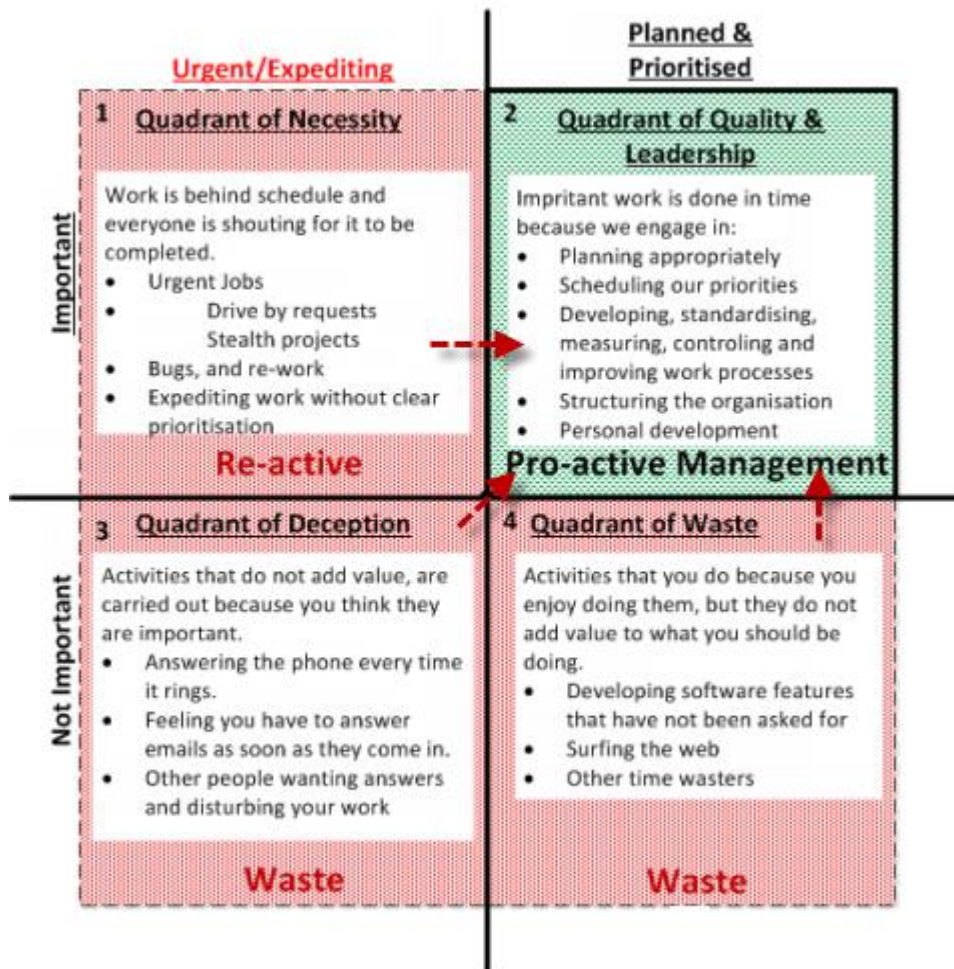


Figure 1.0. The activities in each quadrant are arbitrary.

With the time-management quadrants in mind, consider the question you answered at the beginning of this section. What quadrant do your answers fit in? My guess is quadrant 2: deeply important, but not urgent. And because they aren't urgent, you don't do them.

I put a group of shopping-centre managers through the same exercise. The thing they said would make a tremendous difference was to build helpful personal relationships with their tenants - the owners of the stores inside the centre - a quadrant 2 activity.

We did an analysis of how much time they spent on that activity. It was less than 5 percent of their time. They had good reasons: urgent problems, one after the other. Reports, meetings, calls, interruptions. Quadrant 1 consumed them. The only time they did spend with store managers was filled with negative energy: when they had to collect money or correct advertising practices that were out-of-line.

The owners decided to be proactive. They resolved to spend one-third of their time improving their relationships with tenants. I worked with the organisations a year and a half, and saw their time spent with tenants climb to 20 percent. They became listeners and consultants to their tenants. The effect was profound.

Tenants were thrilled with the new ideas and skills the owners brought them. Sales in the stores climbed, and so did revenues from the leases.

Quadrant 2 activities are very powerful, because they are closely tied to results. Your effectiveness will increase dramatically with a small increase in those activities; your crises will be fewer and smaller.

To say “yes” to important things requires you to learn to say no to other activities, some of them urgent. Keep in mind that you are always saying “no” to something. If it isn’t to the urgent things in your life, it’s probably to the more fundamental, important things.

Effective people don’t spend their time on non-important activities because, urgent or not, they’re not important. In reality, the urgency of non-important matters is often based on the priorities and expectations of others. Effective people spend most of their time on important, but not urgent activities (quadrant 2), such as building relationships, personal development and preparation.

### **Application suggestions:**

To pursue quadrant 2:

1. Identify your key roles: Business, family, place of worship -whatever comes to mind as important. Think of those you will act in for the coming week.
2. Think of two or three important results you feel you should accomplish in each role during the next seven days. At least some of these goals should be quadrant 2 activities.
3. Look at the week ahead with your goals in mind, and block out the time each day to achieve them. Once your key goals are in place, look how much time you have left for everything else! How well you succeed will depend on how resilient and determined you are at defending your most important priorities.

*You can find further application suggestions in Covey’s original book: The 7 habits of highly effective people.*

## 4. Think Win/Win

### Habit Four

Having realised how much power we actually have over our own lives (Habit 1: Be proactive), considering then what we truly wish to achieve throughout our lifetime (Habit 2: Begin with the end in mind), and then taking action (Habit 3: Putting first things first), we now come to a point where interacting with other proactive, mission focused and organised people will exponentially increase effectiveness.

In order to manage our relationships with others effectively, we need to think “Win/Win”. Beyond being a technique, it is a philosophy. There are 6 paradigms of human interaction:

- Win
- Win/Lose
- Lose/Win
- Lose/Lose
- Win/Win or No Deal
- Win/Win

#### **What’s wrong with a simple Win, or at worse a Win/Lose?**

- Win: People working in the Win paradigm wish to win at all costs, other people don’t matter. It’s an “every man for himself” mindset.
- Win/Lose: The Win/Lose mindset is dysfunctional, often overly competitive and requires the use of power, position, possessions or personality to get one’s way, i.e. your boss uses his authority to impose a potentially stressful deadline on you.

#### **Who could possibly want to work from a Lose/Lose or a Lose/Win point of view?**

- Lose/Win people prefer to keep the peace by giving in or giving up rather than disturbing the relationship. In the long run a build-up of resentment can easily lead to an eventual breakdown of the relationship.
- Lose/Lose is the philosophy of highly dependent people, and results from the encounter of two Win/Lose individuals. For instance, a divorce in which the husband is ordered by the judge to sell his assets and turn over half of the earnings to his ex-wife. In compliance, he sells his car, worth \$10.000, for \$50 and gives \$25 to his ex-wife.

### **When does a Win/Win or No Deal situation occur?**

Win/Win or No Deal is the case where, if a mutually beneficial situation can't be reached, then both parties "agree to disagree" and both walk away with no hard feelings. This is a typically realistic option at the beginning of a relationship or enterprise.

### **Why is Win/Win the ideal solution?**

As mentioned above, when two proactive, mission focused and organised people meet, effectiveness can be increased far beyond what we can achieve alone. Win/Win is a synergistic situation where both parties can mutually benefit. Win/Win takes a certain amount of investment to favour its occurrence.

The first step is to recognise what the status of our human interaction is at a given time. We must not only ask ourselves what we want but also what the other party wants from a given situation, bearing in mind that it's ok to walk away if a common agreement is not found (Win/Win or No Deal).

### **Balancing Courage and Consideration**

Our natural tendency is to think in dichotomies, in either/or terms. We tend to think that if we're nice, we're not tough.

But Win/Win is nice...and tough. It's twice as tough as Win/Lose, to go for Win/Win, you not only have to be nice, you have to be courageous. You not only have to be empathic, you have to be confident.

- Being high on courage and low on consideration is thinking Win/Lose. It's having the courage of our convictions, but not being considerate about others' convictions.
- Being high on consideration and low on courage is thinking Lose/Win. It's being so considerate of someone else's convictions and desires that we won't have the courage to express and realise our own.

To achieve the balance between courage and consideration is the essence of real maturity and is fundamental to Win/Win.

## Three traits

Using the paradigm of Win/Win requires three traits:

1. **Integrity** - We define integrity as the value we place on ourselves: We need to be self-aware, possessed of an independent will. We make and keep meaningful promises and commitments to ourselves and others.
2. **Maturity** - This is the balance between courage and consideration. Simply put, you must have enough empathy and goodwill to work for a win for your counterpart, and enough courage to make a win for yourself.
3. **Abundance Mindset** - You must know and believe that there is plenty out there for everybody. Many people don't: They think that to succeed themselves, others must fail. They harbour secret hopes that other people must suffer misfortune -not terrible misfortune, but acceptable misfortune that will keep them in their place. The Abundance Mindset recognizes that possibilities for growth and success are potentially limitless, and sees in others the opportunity to complement its own strengths.

## Application suggestions:

- Think about an upcoming interaction in which you will be attempting to reach an agreement or negotiate a solution. Commit to maintain a balance between courage (your Win) and consideration (the other parties' Win).

*You can find further application suggestions in Covey's original book: The 7 habits of highly effective people.*



## 5. Seek to understand, then be understood

### Habit Five

Even if (and especially when) another person is not coming from a Win/Win paradigm, seek first to understand. Habit 5 shows us how we can cooperatively deal with situations that arise within Win/Win situations when we're trying to work together, taking into account our differences. We have a general tendency to rush into other people's issues and try to fix them by giving advice, often failing to take time to diagnose, to really, deeply understand the problem first.

#### First seek to understand

There are four basic types of communication:

- Reading
- Writing
- Speaking
- Listening

In comparison, the many hours spent learning how to do the first three, the last type of communication has been neglected. Comparatively few people have had any training in listening at all. Seeking to first understand involves a very deep paradigm shift: we typically seek first to be understood. We have a tendency to listen with the intent of replying rather than that of understanding. We're generally either speaking or preparing to speak, most often considering what the other person is saying only based on our own experiences and points of view.

#### Empathic listening

When another person speaks, we're usually "listening" at one of four levels:

- **Ignoring:** Not listening at all
- **Pretending:** "Yes. Hmm. Right."
- **Selective listening:** Hearing only selective parts of the conversation
- **Attentive listening:** Paying attention and focusing energy on the words that are being said.

Very few of us ever practice listening on the fifth level, the highest form of listening: the **empathic listening** level. Empathic listening involves getting inside another person's frame of reference, with the intent of true understanding. Seeing the world the way other people see it allows us to understand how they feel.

"Empathic listening is with the ears, eyes, and heart - for feeling, for meaning."

It's powerful because it gives you accurate data to work with, instead of projecting and assuming your own thoughts and motives

## **Then seek to be understood**

It takes a great deal of security to go into a deep listening experience because we open ourselves up to be influenced. We become vulnerable. Because you really listen, you become influenceable. And being influenceable is the key to influencing others. This is why habits 1, 2 and 3 are so foundational: because they allow us to remain centred and aware of ourselves, therefore handling vulnerability caused by an external source with confidence.

Being understood is equally important in reaching Win/Win solutions. In Habit 4, “maturity” is defined as the balance between courage and consideration. Seeking to understand requires consideration. Seeking to be understood needs courage. Win/Win requires a high degree of both.

### **Application suggestions:**

- The next time you have an opportunity to watch people communicate, cover your ears for a few minutes and just watch. Look for emotions that are being communicated, but that may not come across in words alone.

*You can find further application suggestions in Covey's original book: The 7 habits of highly effective people.*

## 6. Synergize

### Habit Six

When Winston Churchill was called to lead Great Britain's war effort, he remarked that all his life had prepared him for this hour.

In a similar sense, the exercise of all the other habits prepares us for the habit of synergy. Properly understood, synergy is the highest activity of life. Through it, we create new, untapped alternatives - things that didn't yet exist. We unleash people's greatest powers.

In basic terms, synergy means that the whole is greater than the sum of its parts. If the sum " $1+1 = 3$ " seems familiar, this is what it's about. If you plant two plants close together, the roots come together and improve the quality of the soil so that both plants will grow better than if they were separated.

The essence of synergy is to value and respect differences, to build on strengths and to compensate for weaknesses. Many of us haven't actually experienced synergy in our family lives or in other interactions. We've been shaped into defensive and protective communications or into believing that life or other people can't be trusted. Therefore, we have a tendency to not open up to this highly effective principle which requires enormous personal security and openness and a spirit of adventure.

Below are 3 different levels of communication and the level of trust that is associated to each:

1. **Defensive communication** is of the lowest level and comes out of low-trust situations. It's characterised by defensiveness, protectiveness and legalistic language which prepares for the eventuality that things may go wrong, that people may become resentful. Such communication isn't effective and produces only Win/Lose or Lose/Lose outcomes.
2. **Respectful communication** is characterised by honesty, authenticity and respect which produces a low form of Win/Win, a compromise where  $1+1 = 1\frac{1}{2}$ .
3. **Synergistic communication** means that  $1+1$  may equal 8, 16 or even 1'600. The situation produced is better than any originally proposed.

Even if there are circumstances in which synergy is not achievable and "No Deal" isn't viable, the spirit of sincere trying will usually result in a more effective compromise.

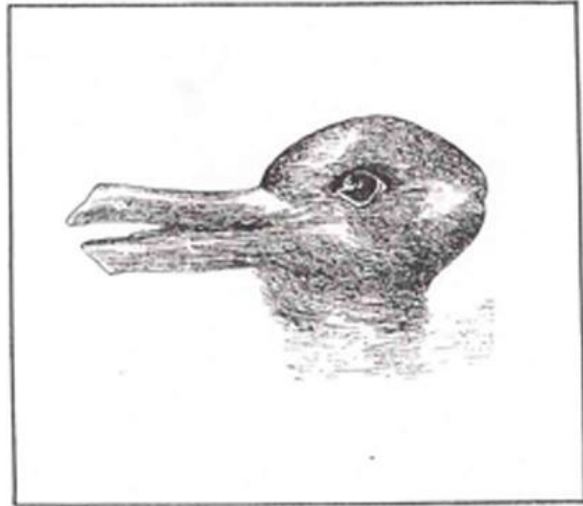
Mental, emotional and psychological differences between us mean that we see the world not as it is, but as we are. Recognising our own perceptual limitations

and appreciating the rich resources available through the interaction with other human beings takes humility and reverence.

It is possible for two people to disagree yet both be right.

***What do you see in this picture?***

Whilst some of us see a duck others will see a rabbit. We're both looking at the same picture, and both of us are right. We see the same black and white lines but we interpret them differently because we've been conditioned to interpret them differently. Unless we value the differences in our perceptions, unless we value each other and give credence to the possibility that we're both right, that life is not always a dichotomous either/or, that there are almost always third alternatives, we will never be able to transcend the limits of that conditioning. When we see only two alternatives – ours and the “wrong” one – we can look for a synergistic third alternative.



There's almost always a third alternative, and if we work with a Win/Win philosophy (Habit 4: Think Win/Win) and really seek to understand (Habit 5: Seek first to understand, then to be understood), we can usually find a solution that will be better for everyone concerned.

Once people have experienced real synergy, they are never quite the same again. The device that opens us to synergy's power depends on all the habits of effectiveness at once, requiring confidence, integrity, and empathy. It's all embodied in one crucial ability: to value and exploit the mental, emotional, and psychological differences between people.

**Application suggestions**

- Make a list of people who irritate you. Do they represent different views that could lead to synergy if you had greater intrinsic security and valued the difference?
- The next time you have a disagreement or confrontation with someone, attempt to understand the concerns underlying that person's position. Address those concerns in a creative and mutually beneficial way.

*You can find further application suggestions in Covey's original book: The 7 habits of highly effective people.*

## 7. Sharpen the saw

### Habit Seven

Suppose you come upon a man in the woods feverishly sawing down a tree.

"You look exhausted!" you exclaim. "How long have you been at it?"

"Over five hours," he replies, "and I am beat. This is hard."

"Maybe you could take a break for a few minutes and sharpen that saw. Then the work would go faster."

"No time," the man says emphatically. "I'm too busy sawing."

Habit seven is taking time to sharpen the saw (you're the saw). It's the habit that makes all the others possible. The last habit is about cultivating the greatest asset we have – ourselves.

To sharpen the saw means renewing ourselves, in all four aspects of our natures:

- **Physical** - The Physical dimension involves caring effectively for our physical body. The right nutrition, relaxation and exercising on a regular basis are all necessary. A good exercise program is one we can do in our own homes. The greatest benefit we experience from exercising is the development of "Habit 1: Be Proactive."

As we act based on the value of physical well-being instead of reacting to the forces that keep us from exercising, our paradigm of ourselves, our self-esteem, our self-confidence and our integrity are all profoundly affected.

- **Mental** - The Mental dimension is about reading good literature on a regular basis to renew and expand our minds. Also, keeping a journal of our thoughts, experiences and insights is far more beneficial than overexposure to television.
- **Social/Emotional** - The Social/emotional dimension is highly related to our sense of personal security. Intrinsic security doesn't come from what other people think of us or how they treat us, from our circumstances or our position. It comes from within. It comes from accurate paradigms and correct principles deep in our own minds and hearts. It comes from inside-out congruence, from living a life of integrity in which our daily habits reflect our deepest values.
- **Spiritual** - The Spiritual dimension is our core, our centre, our commitment to our value system. This dimension is related to a very

private area of our lives and draws upon the sources that inspire and uplift us. People do work on this very, very differently.

The balance in all four dimensions of renewal is important. To neglect any one area negatively impacts the rest. Renewal becomes optimally effective as we deal with all four dimensions in a wise and balanced way.

Although different words are used, most philosophies of life deal either explicitly or implicitly with these four dimensions. Investment in ourselves is the single most powerful investment we can ever make in life. Furthermore, no one can do it for us, we must do it for ourselves.

### **Application suggestions**

- Make a list of activities that would help you keep in good physical shape, that would fit your life-style and that you could enjoy over time.
- Make a similar list of renewing activities in your spiritual and mental dimensions.
- In your social-emotional area, list relationships you would like to improve.

*You can find further application suggestions in Covey's original book: The 7 habits of highly effective people.*