

Habit 2: Begin with the End in Mind TM

What lies behind us and what lies before us are tiny matters compared to what lies within us

-- Oliver Wendell Holmes

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Please find a place to read these next few pages where you can be alone and uninterrupted. Clear your mind of everything except what you will read and what I will invite you to do. Don't worry about your schedule, your business, your family, or your friends. Just focus with me and really open your mind.

In your mind's eye, see yourself going to the funeral parlor or chapel, parking the car, and getting out. As you walk inside the building, you notice the flowers, the soft organ music. You see the faces of friends and family you pass along the way. You feel the shared sorrow of losing, the joy of having known, that radiates from the hearts of the people there.

As you walk down to 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 today. All these people have come to honor you, to express feelings of love and appreciation for your life.

As you take a seat and wait for the services to begin, you look at the program in your hand. There are to be four speakers. The first one is from your family, immediate and also extended -- children, brothers, sisters, nephews, nieces, aunts, uncles, cousins, and grandparents who have come from all over the country to attend. The second speaker is one of your friends, someone who can give a sense of what you were as a person. The third speaker is from your work or profession. And the fourth is from your church or some community organization where you've been involved in service.

Now think deeply. What would you like each of these speakers to say about you and your life? What kind of husband, wife, father, or mother would you like their words to reflect? What kind of son or daughter or cousin? What kind of friend? What kind of working associate?

What character would you like them to have seen in you? What contributions, what achievements would you want them to remember? Look carefully at the people around you. What difference would you like to have made in their lives?

Before you read further, take a few minutes to jot down your impressions. It will greatly increase your personal understanding of Habit 2.

What it Means to "Begin with the End in Mind"

If you participated seriously in this visualization experience, you touched for a moment some of your deep, fundamental values. You established brief contact with that inner guidance system at the heart of your Circle of Influence

Consider the words of Joseph Addison:

When I look upon the tombs of the great, every emotion of envy dies in me; when I read the epitaphs of the beautiful, every inordinate desire goes out; when I meet with the grief of parents upon a tombstone, my heart melts with compassion; when I see the tomb of the parents themselves, I consider the vanity of grieving for those whom we must quickly follow: when I see kings lying by those who deposed them, I consider rival wits placed side by side, or the holy men that divided the world with their contests and disputes, I reflect with sorrow and astonishment on the little competitions, factions, and debates of mankind. When I read the several dates of the tombs, of some that died yesterday, and some six hundred years ago, I consider that great Day when we shall all of us be Contemporaries, and make our appearance together.

Although Habit 2 applies to many different circumstances and levels of life, the most fundamental

application of "Begin with the End in Mind" is to begin today with the image, picture, or paradigm of the end of your life as your frame of reference or the criterion by which everything else is examined. Each part of your life -- today's behavior, tomorrow's behavior, next week's behavior, next month's behavior -- can be examined in the context of the whole, of what really matters most to you. By keeping that end clearly in mind, you can make certain that whatever you do on any particular day does not violate the criteria you have defined as supremely important, and that each day of your life contributes in a meaningful way to the vision you have of your life as a whole.

To Begin with the End in Mind means to start with a clear understanding of your destination. It means to know where you're going so that you better understand where you are now and so that the steps you take are always in the right direction.

It's incredibly easy to get caught up in an activity trap, in the busy-ness of life, to work harder and harder at climbing the ladder of success only to discover it's leaning against the wrong wall. It is possible to be busy -- very busy -- without being very effective.

People often find themselves achieving victories that are empty, successes that have come at the expense of things they suddenly realize were far more valuable to them. People from every walk of life -- doctors, academicians, actors, politicians, business professionals, athletes, and plumbers -- often struggle to achieve a higher income, more recognition or a certain degree of professional competence, only to find that their drive to achieve their goal blinded them to the things that really mattered most and now are gone.

How different our lives are when we really know what is deeply important to us, and, keeping that picture in mind, we manage ourselves each day to be and to do what really matters most. If the ladder is not leaning against the right wall, every step we take just gets us to the wrong place faster. We may be very busy, we may be very efficient, but we will also be truly effective only when we Begin with the End in Mind.

If you carefully consider what you wanted to be said of you in the funeral experience, you will find your definition of success. It may be very different from the definition you thought you had in mind. Perhaps fame, achievement, money, or some of the other things we strive for are not even part of the right wall.

When you Begin with the End in Mind, you gain a different perspective. One man asked another on the death of a mutual friend, "How much did he leave?" His friend responded, "He left it all."

All Things Are Created Twice

"Begin with the End in Mind" is based on the principle that all things are created twice. There's a mental or first creation, and a physical or second creation to all things

Take the construction of a home, for example. You create it in every detail before you ever hammer the first nail into place. You try to get a very clear sense of what kind of house you want. If you want a family-centered home, you plan a family room where it would be a natural gathering place. You plan sliding doors and a patio for children to play outside. You work with ideas. You work with your mind until you get a clear image of what you want to build.

Then you reduce it to blueprint and develop construction plans. All of this is done before the earth is touched. If not, then in the second creation, the physical creation, you will have to make expensive changes that may double the cost of your home.

The carpenter's rule is "measure twice, cut once." You have to make sure that the blueprint, the first creation, is really what you want, that you've thought everything through. Then you put it into bricks and mortar. Each day you go to the construction shed and pull out the blueprint to get marching orders for the day. You Begin with the End in Mind.

For another example, look at a business. If you want to have a successful enterprise, you clearly

define what you're trying to accomplish. You carefully think through the product or service you want to provide in terms of your market target, then you organize all the elements -- financial, research and development, operations, marketing, personnel, physical facilities, and so on -- to meet that objective. The extent to which you Begin with the End in Mind often determines whether or not you are able to create a successful enterprise. Most business failures begin in the first creation, with problems such as undercapitalization, misunderstanding of the market, or lack of a business plan.

The same is true with parenting. If you want to raise responsible, self-disciplined children, you have to keep that end clearly in mind as you interact with your children on a daily basis. You can't behave toward them in ways that undermine their self-discipline or self-esteem.

To varying degrees, people use this principle in many different areas of life. Before you go on a trip, you determine your destination and plan out the best route. Before you plant a garden, you plan it out in your mind, possibly on paper. You create speeches on paper before you give them, you envision the landscaping in your yard before you landscape it, you design the clothes you make before you thread the needle.

To the extent to which we understand the principle of two creations and accept the responsibility for both, we act within and enlarge the borders of our Circle of Influence. To the extent to which we do not operate in harmony with this principle and take charge of the first creation, we diminish it.

By Design or Default

It's a principle that all things are created twice, but not all first creations are by conscious design. In our personal lives, if we do not develop our own self-awareness and become responsible for first creations, we empower other people and circumstances outside our Circle of Influence to shape much of our lives by default. We reactively live the scripts handed to us by family, associates, other people's agendas, the pressures of circumstance -- scripts from our earlier years, from our training, our conditioning

These scripts come from people, not principles. And they rise out of our deep vulnerabilities, our deep dependency on others and our need for acceptance and love, for belonging, for a sense of importance and worth, for a feeling that we matter.

Whether we are aware of it or not, whether we are in control of it or not, there is a first creation to every part of our lives. We are either the second creation of our own proactive design, or we are the second creation of other people's agendas, of circumstances, or of past habits

The unique human capacities of self-awareness, imagination, and conscience enable us to examine first creations and make it possible for us to take charge of our own first creation, to write our own script. Put another way, Habit 1 says, "You are the creator." Habit 2 is the first creation.

Leadership and Management -- The Two Creations

Habit 2 is based on principles of personal leadership, which means that leadership is the first creation. Leadership is not management. Management is the second creation, which we'll discuss in the chapter on Habit 3. But leadership has to come first.

Management is a bottom-line focus: How can I best accomplish certain things? Leadership deals with the top line: What are the things I want to accomplish? In the words of both Peter Drucker and Warren Bennis, "Management is doing things right; leadership is doing the right things." Management is efficiency in climbing the ladder of success; leadership determines whether the ladder is leaning against the right wall.

You can quickly grasp the important difference between the two if you envision a group of producers cutting their way through the jungle with machetes. They're the producers, the problem

solvers. They're cutting through the undergrowth, clearing it out.

The managers are behind them, sharpening their machetes, writing policy and procedure manuals, holding muscle development programs, bringing in improved technologies, and setting up working schedules and compensation programs for machete wielders.

The leader is the one who climbs the tallest tree, surveys the entire situation, and yells, "Wrong jungle!"

But how do the busy, efficient producers and managers often respond? "Shut up! We're making progress."

As individuals, groups, and businesses, we're often so busy cutting through the undergrowth we don't even realize we're in the wrong jungle. And the rapidly changing environment in which we live makes effective leadership more critical than it has ever been -- in every aspect of independent and interdependent life.

We are more in need of a vision or designation and a compass (a set of principles or directions) and less in need of a road map. We often don't know what the terrain ahead will be like or what we will need to go through it; much will depend on our judgment at the time. But an inner compass will always give us direction.

Effectiveness -- often even survival -- does not depend solely on how much effort we expend, but on whether or not the effort we expend is in the right jungle. And the metamorphosis taking place in most every industry and profession demands leadership first and management second.

In business, the market is changing so rapidly that many products and services that successfully met consumer tastes and needs a few years ago are obsolete today. Proactive powerful leadership must constantly monitor environmental change, particularly customer buying habits and motives, and provide the force necessary to organize resources in the right direction.

Such changes as deregulation of the airline industry, skyrocketing costs of health care, and the great quality and quantity of imported cars impact the environment in significant ways. If industries do not monitor the environment, including their own work teams, and exercise the creative leadership to keep headed in the right direction, no amount of management expertise can keep them from failing.

Efficient management without effective leadership is, as one individual phrased it, "like straightening deck chairs on the Titanic." No management success can compensate for failure in leadership. But leadership is hard because we're often caught in a management paradigm.

At the final session of a year-long executive development program in Seattle, the president of an oil company came up to me and said, "Stephen, when you pointed out the difference between leadership and management in the second month, I looked at my role as the president of this company and realized that I had never been into leadership. I was deep into management, buried by pressing challenges and the details of day-to-day logistics. So I decided to withdraw from management. I could get other people to do that. I wanted to really lead my organization.

"It was hard. I went through withdrawal pains because I stopped dealing with a lot of the pressing, urgent matters that were right in front of me and which gave me a sense of immediate accomplishment. I didn't receive much satisfaction as I started wrestling with the direction issues, the culture-building issues, the deep analysis of problems, the seizing of new opportunities. Others also went through withdrawal pains from their working style comfort zones. They missed the easy accessibility I had given them before. They still wanted me to be available to them, to respond, to help solve their problems on a day-to-day basis.

"But I persisted. I was absolutely convinced that I needed to provide leadership. And I did. Today our whole business is different. We're more in line with our environment. We have doubled our revenues and quadrupled our profits. I'm into leadership."

I'm convinced that too often parents are also trapped in the management paradigm, thinking of control, efficiency, and rules instead of direction, purpose, and family feeling.

And leadership is even more lacking in our personal lives. We're into managing with efficiency, setting and achieving goals before we have even clarified our values.

Rescripting: Becoming Your Own First Creator

As we previously observed, proactivity is based on the unique human endowment of self-awareness. The two additional unique human endowments that enable us to expand our proactivity and to exercise personal leadership in our lives are imagination and conscience.

Through imagination, we can visualize the uncreated worlds of potential that lie within us. Through conscience, we can come in contact with universal laws or principles with our own singular talents and avenues of contribution, and with the personal guidelines within which we can most effectively develop them. Combined with self-awareness, these two endowments empower us to write our own script.

Because we already live with many scripts that have been handed to us, the process of writing our own script is actually more a process of "rescripting," or Paradigm Shifting -- of changing some of the basic paradigms that we already have. As we recognize the ineffective scripts, the incorrect or incomplete paradigms within us, we can proactively begin to rescript ourselves.

I think one of the most inspiring accounts of the rescripting process comes from the autobiography of Anwar Sadat, past president of Egypt. Sadat had been reared, nurtured, and deeply scripted in a hatred for Israel. He would make the statement on national television, "I will never shake the hand of an Israeli as long as they occupy one inch of Arab soil. Never, never, never!" And huge crowds all around the country would chant, "Never, never, never!" He marshaled the energy and unified the will of the whole country in that script.

The script was very independent and nationalistic, and it aroused deep emotions in the people. But it was also very foolish, and Sadat knew it. It ignored the perilous, highly interdependent reality of the situation.

So he rescripted himself. It was a process he had learned when he was a young man imprisoned in Cell 54, a solitary cell in Cairo Central Prison, as a result of his involvement in a conspiracy plot against King Farouk. He learned to withdraw from his own mind and look at it to see if the scripts were appropriate and wise. He learned how to vacate his own mind and, through a deep personal process of meditation, to work with his own scriptures, his own form of prayer, and rescript himself.

He records that he was almost loath to leave his prison cell because it was there that he realized that real success is success with self. It's not in having things, but in having mastery, having victory over self.

For a period of time during Nasser's administration Sadat was relegated to a position of relative insignificance. Everyone felt that his spirit was broken, but it wasn't. They were projecting their own home movies onto him. They didn't understand him. He was biding his time.

And when that time came, when he became president of Egypt and confronted the political realities, he rescripted himself toward Israel. He visited the Knesset in Jerusalem and opened up one of the most precedent-breaking peace movements in the history of the world, a bold initiative that eventually brought about the Camp David Accord.

Sadat was able to use his self-awareness, his imagination, and his conscience to exercise personal leadership, to change an essential paradigm, to change the way he saw the situation. He worked in the center of his Circle of Influence. And from that rescripting, that change in paradigm, flowed changes in behavior and attitude that affected millions of lives in the wider Circle of Concern.

In developing our own self-awareness many of us discover ineffective scripts, deeply embedded habits that are totally unworthy of us, totally incongruent with the things we really value in life. Habit 2 says we don't have to live with those scripts. We are response-able to use our imagination and

creativity to write new ones that are more effective, more congruent with our deepest values and with the correct principles that give our values meaning.

Suppose, for example, that I am highly overreactive to my children. Suppose that whenever they begin to do something I feel is inappropriate, I sense an immediate tensing in the pit of my stomach. I feel defensive walls go up; I prepare for battle. My focus is not on the long-term growth and understanding but on the short-term behavior. I'm trying to win the battle, not the war.

I pull out my ammunition -- my superior size, my position of authority -- and I yell or intimidate or I threaten or punish. And I win. I stand there, victorious, in the middle of the debris of a shattered relationship while my children are outwardly submissive and inwardly rebellious, suppressing feelings that will come out later in uglier ways.

Now if I were sitting at that funeral we visualized earlier, and one of my children was about to speak, I would want his life to represent the victory of teaching, training, and disciplining with love over a period of years rather than the battle scars of quick-fix skirmishes. I would want his heart and mind to be filled with the pleasant memories of deep, meaningful times together. I would want him to remember me as a loving father who shared the fun and the pain of growing up. I would want him to remember the times he came to me with his problems and concerns. I would want to have listened and loved and helped. I would want him to know I wasn't perfect, but that I had tried with everything I had. And that, perhaps more than anybody in the world, I loved him.

The reason I would want those things is because, deep down, I value my children. I love them, I want to help them. I value my role as their father.

But I don't always see those values. I get caught up in the "thick of thin things." What matters most gets buried under layers of pressing problems, immediate concerns, and outward behaviors. I become reactive. And the way I interact with my children every day often bears little resemblance to the way I deeply feel about them.

Because I am self-aware, because I have imagination and conscience, I can examine my deepest values. I can realize that the script I'm living is not in harmony with those values, that my life is not the product of my own proactive design, but the result of the first creation I have deferred to circumstances and other people. And I can change. I can live out of my imagination instead of my memory. I can tie myself to my limitless potential instead of my limiting past. I can become my own first creator.

To Begin with the End in Mind means to approach my role as a parent, as well as my other roles in life, with my values and directions clear. It means to be responsible for my own first creation, to rescript myself so that the paradigms from which my behavior and attitude flow are congruent with my deepest values and in harmony with correct principles.

It also means to begin each day with those values firmly in mind. Then as the vicissitudes, as the challenges come, I can make my decisions based on those values. I can act with integrity. I don't have to react to the emotion, the circumstance. I can be truly proactive, value driven, because my values are clear.

A Personal Mission Statement

The most effective way I know to Begin with the End in Mind is to develop a personal mission statement or philosophy or creed. It 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.

Because each individual is unique, a personal mission statement will reflect that uniqueness, both in content and form. My friend, Rolfe Kerr, has expressed his personal creed in this way:

Succeed at home first.

Seek and merit divine help.
Never compromise with honesty.
Remember the people involved.
Hear both sides before judging.
Obtain counsel of others.
Defend those who are absent.
Be sincere yet decisive.
Develop one new proficiency a year.
Plan tomorrow's work today.
Hustle while you wait.
Maintain a positive attitude.
Keep a sense of humor.
Be orderly in person and in work.

Do not fear mistakes -- fear only the absence of creative, constructive, and corrective responses to those mistakes.

Facilitate the success of subordinates.

Listen twice as much as you speak.

Concentrate all abilities and efforts on the task at hand, not worrying about the next job or promotion.

A woman seeking to balance family and work values has expressed her sense of personal mission differently:

I will seek to balance career and family as best I can since both are important to me.

My home will be a place where I and my family, friends, and guests find joy, comfort, peace, and happiness. Still I will seek to create a clean and orderly environment, yet livable and comfortable. I will exercise wisdom in what we choose to eat, read, see, and do at home. I especially want to teach my children to love, to learn, and to laugh -- and to work and develop their unique talents.

I value the rights, freedoms, and responsibilities of our democratic society. I will be a concerned and informed citizen, involved in the political process to ensure my voice is heard and my vote is counted.

I will be a self-starting individual who exercises initiative in accomplishing my life's goals. I will act on situations and opportunities, rather than to be acted upon.

I will always try to keep myself free from addictive and destructive habits. I will develop habits that free me from old labels and limits and expand my capabilities and choices.

My money will be my servant, not my master. I will seek financial independence over time. My wants will be subject to my needs and my means. Except for long-term home and car loans, I will seek to keep myself free from consumer debt. I will spend less than I earn and regularly save or invest part of my income.

Moreover, I will use what money and talents I have to make life more enjoyable for others through service and charitable giving.

You could call a personal mission statement a personal constitution. Like the United States Constitution, it's fundamentally changeless. In over 200 years, there have been only 26 amendments, 10 of which were in the original Bill of Rights.

The United States Constitution is the standard by which every law in the country is evaluated. It is the document the president agrees to defend and support when he takes the Oath of Allegiance. It is the criterion by which people are admitted into citizenship. It is the foundation and the center that enables people to ride through such major traumas as the Civil War, Vietnam, or Watergate. It is the written standard, the key criterion by which everything else is evaluated and directed.

The Constitution has endured and serves its vital function today because it is based on correct

principles, on the self-evident truths contained in the Declaration of Independence. These principles empower the Constitution with a timeless strength, even in the midst of social ambiguity and change. "Our peculiar security," said Thomas Jefferson, "is in the possession of a written Constitution."

A personal mission statement based on correct principles becomes the same kind of standard for an individual. It becomes a personal constitution, the basis for making major, life-directing decisions, the basis for making daily decisions in the midst of the circumstances and emotions that affect our lives. It empowers individuals with the same timeless strength in the midst of change.

People can't live with change if there's not a changeless core inside them. The key to the ability to change is a changeless sense of who you are, what you are about and what you value.

With a mission statement, we can flow with changes. We don't need prejudgments or prejudices. We don't need to figure out everything else in life, to stereotype and categorize everything and everybody in order to accommodate reality.

Our personal environment is also changing at an ever-increasing pace. Such rapid change burns out a large number of people who feel they can hardly handle it, can hardly cope with life. They become reactive and essentially give up, hoping that the things that happen to them will be good.

But it doesn't have to be that way. In the Nazi death camps where Viktor Frankl learned the principle of proactivity, he also learned the importance of purpose, of meaning in life. The essence of "logotherapy," the philosophy he later developed and taught, is that many so-called mental and emotional illnesses are really symptoms of an underlying sense of meaninglessness or emptiness. Logotherapy eliminates that emptiness by helping the individual to detect his unique meaning, his mission in life.

Once you have that sense of mission, you have the essence of your own proactivity. You have the vision and the values which direct your life. You have the basic direction from which you set your long- and short-term goals. You have the power of a written constitution based on correct principles, against which every decision concerning the most effective use of your time, your talents, and your energies can be effectively measured.

At the Center

In order to write a personal mission statement, we must begin at the very center of our Circle of Influence, that center comprised of our most basic Our paradigms, the lens through which we see the world.

It is here that we deal with our vision and our values. It is here that we use our endowment of self-awareness to examine our maps and, if we value correct principles, to make certain that our maps accurately describe the territory, that our paradigms are based on principles and reality. It is here that we use our endowment of conscience as a compass to help us detect our own unique talents and areas of contribution. It is here that we use our endowment of imagination to mentally create the end we desire, giving direction and purpose to our beginnings and providing the substance of a written personal constitution.

It is also here that our focused efforts achieve the greatest results. As we work within the very center of our Circle of Influence, we expand it. This is highest-leverage PC work, significantly impacting the effectiveness of every aspect of our lives.

Whatever is at the center of our life will be the source of our security, guidance, wisdom, and power.

Security represents your sense of worth, your identity, your emotional anchorage, your self-esteem, your basic personal strength or lack of it.

Guidance means your source of direction in life. Encompassed by your map, your internal frame of reference that interprets for you what is happening out there, are standards or principles or implicit criteria that govern moment-by-moment decision-making and doing.

Wisdom is your perspective on life, your sense of balance, your understanding of how the various parts and principles apply and relate to each other. It embraces judgment, discernment, comprehension. It is a gestalt or oneness, an integrated wholeness.

Power is the faculty or capacity to act, the strength and potency to accomplish something. It is the vital energy to make choices and decisions. It also includes the capacity to overcome deeply embedded habits and to cultivate higher, more effective ones.

These four factors -- security, guidance, wisdom, and power -- are interdependent. Security and clear guidance bring true wisdom, and wisdom becomes the spark or catalyst to release and direct power. When these four factors are present together, harmonized and enlivened by each other, they create the great force of a noble personality, a balanced character, a beautifully integrated individual.

These life-support factors also undergird every other dimension of life. And none of them is an all-or-nothing matter. The degree to which you have developed each one could be charted somewhere on a continuum, much like the Maturity Continuum described earlier. At the bottom end, the four factors are weak. You are basically dependent on circumstances or other people, things over which you have no direct control. At the top end you are in control. You have independent strength and the foundation for rich, interdependent relationships.

Your security lies somewhere on the continuum between extreme insecurity on one end, wherein your life is buffeted by all the fickle forces that play upon it, and a deep sense of high intrinsic worth and personal security on the other end. Your guidance ranges on the continuum from dependence on the social mirror or other unstable, fluctuating sources to strong inner direction. Your wisdom falls somewhere between a totally inaccurate map where everything is distorted and nothing seems to fit, and a complete and accurate map of life wherein all the parts and principles are properly related to each other. Your power lies somewhere between immobilization or being a puppet pulled by someone else's strings to high proactivity, the power to act according to your own values instead of being acted upon by other people and circumstances.

The location of these factors on the continuum, the resulting degree of their integration, harmony, and balance, and their positive impact on every aspect of your life is a function of your center, the basic paradigms at your very core.

Alternative Centers

Each of us has a center, though we usually don't recognize it as such. Neither do we recognize the all-encompassing effects of that center on every aspect of our lives.

Let's briefly examine several centers or core paradigms people typically have for a better understanding of how they affect these four fundamental dimensions and, ultimately, the sum of life that flows from them.

Spouse Centeredness. Marriage can be the most intimate, the most satisfying, the most enduring, growth-producing of human relationships. It might seem natural and proper to be centered on one's husband or wife.

But experience and observation tell a different story. Over the years, I have been involved in working with many troubled marriages, and I have observed a certain thread weaving itself through almost every spouse-centered relationship I have encountered. That thread is strong emotional dependence.

If our sense of emotional worth comes primarily from our marriage, then we become highly dependent upon that relationship. We become vulnerable to the moods and feelings, the behavior and treatment of our spouse, or to any external event that may impinge on the relationship -- a new child, in-laws, economic setbacks, social successes, and so forth.

When responsibilities increase and stresses come in the marriage, we tend to revert to the scripts we

were given as we were growing up. But so does our spouse. And those scripts are usually different. Different ways of handling financial, child-discipline, or in-law issues come to the surface. When these deep-seated tendencies combine with the emotional dependency in the marriage, the spouse-centered relationship reveals all its vulnerability.

When we are dependent on the person with whom we are in conflict, both need and conflict are compounded. Love-hate overreactions, fight-or-flight tendencies, withdrawal, aggressiveness, bitterness, resentment, and cold competition are some of the usual results. When these occur, we tend to fall even further back on background tendencies and habits in an effort to justify and defend our own behavior and we attack our spouse's.

Inevitably, anytime we are too vulnerable we feel the need to protect ourselves from further wounds. So we resort to sarcasm, cutting humor, criticism -- anything that will keep from exposing the tenderness within. Each partner tends to wait on the initiative of the other for love, only to be disappointed but also confirmed as to the rightness of the accusations made.

There is only phantom security in such a relationship when all appears to be going well. Guidance is based on the emotion of the moment. Wisdom and power are lost in the counterdependent negative interactions.

Family Centeredness. Another common center is the family. This, too, may seem to be natural and proper. As an area of focus and deep investment, it provides great opportunities for deep relationships, for loving, for sharing, for much that makes life worthwhile. But as a center, it ironically destroys the very elements necessary to family success.

People who are family-centered get their sense of security or personal worth from the family tradition and culture or the family reputation. Thus, they become vulnerable to any changes in that tradition or culture and to any influences that would affect that reputation.

Family-centered parents do not have the emotional freedom, the power, to raise their children with their ultimate welfare truly in mind. If they derive their own security from the family, their need to be popular with their children may override the importance of a long-term investment in their children's growth and development. Or they may be focused on the proper and correct behavior of the moment. Any behavior that they consider improper threatens their security. They become upset, guided by the emotions of the moment, spontaneously reacting to the immediate concern rather than the long-term growth and development of the child. They may overreact and punish out of bad temper. They tend to love their children conditionally, making them emotionally dependent or counterdependent and rebellious.

Money Centeredness. Another logical and extremely common center to people's lives is making money. Economic security is basic to one's opportunity to do much in any other dimension. In a hierarchy or continuum of needs, physical survival and financial security comes first. Other needs are not even activated until that basic need is satisfied, at least minimally.

Most of us face economic worries. Many forces in the wider culture can and do act upon our economic situation, causing or threatening such disruption that we often experience concern and worry that may not always rise to the conscious surface.

Sometimes there are apparently noble reasons given for making money, such as the desire to take care of one's family. And these things are important. But to focus on money-making as a center will bring about its own undoing.

Consider again the four life-support factors -- security, guidance, wisdom, and power. Suppose I derive much of my security from my employment or from my income or net worth. Since many factors affect these economic foundations, I become anxious and uneasy, protective and defensive, about anything that may affect them. When my sense of personal worth comes from my net worth, I am vulnerable to anything that will affect that net worth. But work and money, per se, provide no wisdom, no guidance, and only a limited degree of power and security. All it takes to show the

limitations of a money center is a crisis in my life or in the life of a loved one.

Money-centered people often put aside family or other priorities, assuming everyone will understand that economic demands come first. I know one father who was leaving with his children for a promised trip to the circus when a phone call came for him to come to work instead. He declined. When his wife suggested that perhaps he should have gone to work, he responded, "The work will come again, but childhood won't." For the rest of their lives his children remembered this little act of priority setting, not only as an object lesson in their minds but as an expression of love in their hearts.

Work Centeredness. Work-centered people may become "workaholics," driving themselves to produce at the sacrifice of health, relationships, and other important areas of their lives. Their fundamental identity comes from their work -- "I'm a doctor," "I'm a writer," "I'm an actor."

Because their identity and sense of self-worth are wrapped up in their work, their security is vulnerable to anything that happens to prevent them from continuing in it. Their guidance is a function of the demands of the work. Their wisdom and power come in the limited areas of their work, rendering them ineffective in other areas of life.

Possession Centeredness. A driving force of many people is possessions -- not only tangible, material possessions such as fashionable clothes, homes, cars, boats, and jewelry, but also the intangible possessions of fame, glory, or social prominence. Most of us are aware, through our own experience, how singularly flawed such a center is, simply because it can vanish rapidly and it is influenced by so many forces.

If my sense of security lies in my reputation or in the things I have, my life will be in a constant state of threat and jeopardy that these possessions may be lost or stolen or devalued. If I'm in the presence of someone of greater net worth or fame or status, I feel inferior. If I'm in the presence of someone of lesser net worth or fame or status, I feel superior. My sense of self-worth constantly fluctuates. I don't have any sense of constancy or anchorage or persistent selfhood. I am constantly trying to protect and insure my assets, properties, securities, position, or reputation. We have all heard stories of people committing suicide after losing their fortunes in a significant stock decline or their fame in a political reversal.

Pleasure Centeredness. Another common center, closely allied with possessions, is that of fun and pleasure. We live in a world where instant gratification is available and encouraged. Television and movies are major influences in increasing people's expectations. They graphically portray what other people have and can do in living the life of ease and "fun."

But while the glitter of pleasure-centered lifestyles is graphically portrayed, the natural result of such lifestyles -- the impact on the inner person, on productivity, on relationships -- is seldom accurately seen.

Innocent pleasures in moderation can provide relaxation for the body and mind and can foster family and other relationships. But pleasure, per se, offers no deep, lasting satisfaction or sense of fulfillment. The pleasure-centered person, too soon bored with each succeeding level of "fun," constantly cries for more and more. So the next new pleasure has to be bigger and better, more exciting, with a bigger "high." A person in this state becomes almost entirely narcissistic, interpreting all of life in terms of the pleasure it provides to the self here and now.

Too many vacations that last too long, too many movies, too much TV, too much video game playing -- too much undisciplined leisure time in which a person continually takes the course of least resistance -- gradually wastes a life. It ensures that a person's capacities stay dormant, that talents remain undeveloped, that the mind and spirit become lethargic and that the heart is unfulfilled. Where is the security, the guidance, the wisdom, and the power? At the low end of the continuum, in the pleasure of a fleeting moment.

Malcom Muggeridge writes "A Twentieth-Century Testimony":

When I look back on my life nowadays, which I sometimes do, what strikes me most forcibly about

it is that what seemed at the time most significant and seductive, seems now most futile and absurd. For instance, success in all of its various guises; being known and being praised; ostensible pleasures, like acquiring money or seducing women, or traveling, going to and fro in the world and up and down in it like Satan, explaining and experiencing whatever Vanity Fair has to offer.

In retrospect, all these exercises in self-gratification seem pure fantasy, what Pascal called, "licking the earth."

Friend/Enemy Centeredness. Young people are particularly, though certainly not exclusively, susceptible to becoming friend-centered. Acceptance and belonging to a peer group can become almost supremely important. The distorted and ever-changing social mirror becomes the source for the four life-support factors, creating a high degree of dependence on the fluctuating moods, feelings, attitudes, and behavior of others.

Friend centeredness can also focus exclusively on one person, taking on some of the dimensions of marriage. The emotional dependence on one individual, the escalating need/conflict spiral, and the resulting negative interactions can grow out of friend centeredness.

And what about putting an enemy at the center of one's life? Most people would never think of it, and probably no one would ever do it consciously. Nevertheless, enemy centering is very common, particularly when there is frequent interaction between people who are in real conflict. When someone feels he has been unjustly dealt with by an emotionally or socially significant person, it is very easy for him to become preoccupied with the injustice and make the other person the center of his life. Rather than proactively leading his own life, the enemy-centered person is counterdependently reacting to the behavior and attitudes of a perceived enemy.

One friend of mine who taught at a university became very distraught because of the weaknesses of a particular administrator with whom he had a negative relationship. He allowed himself to think about the man constantly until eventually it became an obsession. It so preoccupied him that it affected the quality of his relationships with his family, his church, and his working associates. He finally came to the conclusion that he had to leave the university and accept a teaching appointment somewhere else.

"Wouldn't you really prefer to teach at this university, if the man were not here?" I asked him.

"Yes, I would," he responded. "But as long as he is here, then my staying is too disruptive to everything in life. I have to go.

"Why have you made this administrator the center of your life?" I asked him.

He was shocked by the question. He denied it. But I pointed out to him that he was allowing one individual and his weaknesses to distort his entire map of life, to undermine his faith and the quality of his relationships with his loved ones.

He finally admitted that this individual had had such an impact on him, but he denied that he himself had made all these choices. He attributed the responsibility for the unhappy situation to the administrator. He, himself, he declared, was not responsible.

As we talked, little by little, he came to realize that he was indeed responsible, but that because he did not handle this responsibility well, he was being irresponsible.

Many divorced people fall into a similar pattern. They are still consumed with anger and bitterness and self-justification regarding an ex-spouse. In a negative sense, psychologically they are still married -- they each need the weaknesses of the former partner to justify their accusations.

Many "older" children go through life either secretly or openly hating their parents. They blame them for past abuses, neglect, or favoritism and they center their adult life on that hatred, living out the reactive, justifying script that accompanies it.

The individual who is friend- or enemy-centered has no intrinsic security. Feelings of self-worth are volatile, a function of the emotional state or behavior of other people. Guidance comes from the person's perception of how others will respond, and wisdom is limited by the social lens or by an

enemy-centered paranoia. The individual has no power. Other people are pulling the strings.

Church Centeredness. I believe that almost anyone who is seriously involved in any church will recognize that churchgoing is not synonymous with personal spirituality. There are some people who get so busy in church worship and projects that they become insensitive to the pressing human needs that surround them, contradicting the very precepts they profess to believe deeply. There are others who attend church less frequently or not at all but whose attitudes and behavior reflect a more genuine centering in the principles of the basic Judeo-Christian ethic.

Having participated throughout my life in organized church and community service groups, I have found that attending church does not necessarily mean living the principles taught in those meetings. You can be active in a church but inactive in its gospel.

In the church-centered life, image or appearance can become a person's dominant consideration, leading to hypocrisy that undermines personal security and intrinsic worth. Guidance comes from a social conscience, and the church-centered person tends to label others artificially in terms of "active," "inactive," "liberal," "orthodox," or "conservative."

Because the church is a formal organization made up of policies, programs, practices, and people, it cannot by itself give a person any deep, permanent security or sense of intrinsic worth. Living the principles taught by the church can do this, but the organization alone cannot.

Nor can the church give a person a constant sense of guidance. Church-centered people often tend to live in compartments, acting and thinking and feeling in certain ways on the Sabbath and in totally different ways on weekdays. Such a lack of wholeness or unity or integrity is a further threat to security, creating the need for increased labeling and self-justifying.

Seeing the church as an end rather than as a means to an end undermines a person's wisdom and sense of balance. Although the church claims to teach people about the source of power, it does not claim to be that power itself. It claims to be one vehicle through which divine power can be channeled into man's nature.

Self-Centeredness. Perhaps the most common center today is the self. The most obvious form is selfishness, which violates the values of most people. But if we look closely at many of the popular approaches to growth and self-fulfillment, we often find self-centering at their core.

There is little security, guidance, wisdom, or power in the limited center of self. Like the Dead Sea in Palestine, it accepts but never gives. It becomes stagnant.

On the other hand, paying attention to the development of self in the greater perspective of improving one's ability to serve, to produce, to contribute in meaningful ways, gives context for dramatic increase in the four life-support factors

These are some of the more common centers from which people approach life. It is often much easier to recognize the center in someone else's life than to see it in your own. You probably know someone who puts making money ahead of everything else. You probably know someone whose energy is devoted to justifying his or her position in an ongoing negative relationship. If you look, you can sometimes see beyond behavior into the center that creates it.

Identifying Your Center

But where do you stand? What is at the center of your own life? Sometimes that isn't easy to see

Perhaps the best way to identify your own center is to look closely at your life-support factors. If you can identify with one or more of the descriptions below, you can trace it back to the center from which it flows, a center which may be limiting your personal effectiveness.

If you are Spouse Centered...

SECURITY

Your feelings of security are based on the way your spouse treats you.

You are highly vulnerable to the moods and feelings of your spouse.

There is deep disappointment resulting in withdrawal or conflict when your spouse disagrees with you or does not meet your expectations.

Anything that may impinge on the relationship is perceived as a threat.

GUIDANCE

Your direction comes from your own needs and wants and from those of your spouse.

Your decision-making criterion is limited to what you think is best for your marriage or your mate, or to the preferences and opinions of your spouse.

Your decision-making criterion is limited to what you think is best for your marriage or your mate, or to the preferences and opinions of your spouse.

WISDOM

Your life perspective surrounds things which may positively or negatively influence your spouse or your relationship.

POWER

Your power to act is limited by weaknesses in your spouse and in yourself.

* * *

If you are Family Centered...

SECURITY

Your security is founded on family acceptance and fulfilling family expectations.

Your sense of personal security is as volatile as the family.

Your feelings of self-worth are based on the family reputation.

GUIDANCE

Family scripting is your source of correct attitudes and behaviors.

Your decision-making criterion is what is good for the family, or what family members want.

WISDOM

You interpret all of life in terms of your family, creating a partial understanding and family narcissism.

POWER

Your actions are limited by family models traditions.

* * *

If you are Money Centered...

SECURITY

Your personal worth is determined by your net worth.

You are vulnerable to anything that threatens your economic security.

GUIDANCE

Profit is your decision-making criterion.

WISDOM

Money-making is the lens through which life is seen and understood, creating imbalanced judgment.

POWER

You are restricted to what you can accomplish with your money and your limited vision.

* * *

If you are Work Centered...

SECURITY

You tend to define yourself by your occupational role.

You are only comfortable when you are working.

GUIDANCE

You make your decisions based on the needs and expectations of your work.

WISDOM

You tend to be limited to your work role.

POWER

Your actions are limited by work role models, organizational constraints, occupational opportunities, your boss's perceptions, and your possible inability at some point in your life to do that particular work.

* * *

If you are Possession Centered...

SECURITY

Your security is based on your reputation, your social status, or the tangible things you possess.

You tend to compare what you have to what others have.

GUIDANCE

You make your decisions based on what will protect, increase, or better display your possessions.

WISDOM

You see the world in terms of comparative economic and social relationships.

POWER

You function within the limits of what you can buy or the social prominence you can achieve.

* * *

If you are Pleasure Centered...

SECURITY

You feel secure only when you're on a pleasure "high."

Your security is short-lived, anesthetizing, and dependent on your environment.

GUIDANCE

You make your decisions based on what will give you the most pleasure.

WISDOM

You see the world in terms of what's in it for you.

POWER

Your power is almost negligible.

* * *

If you are Friend Centered...

SECURITY

Your security is a function of the social mirror.

You are highly dependent on the opinion of others.

GUIDANCE

Your decision-making criterion is "What will they think?"

You are easily embarrassed.

WISDOM

You see the world through a social lens.

Your actions are as fickle as opinion.

POWER

You are limited by your social comfort zone.

* * *

If you are Enemy Centered...

SECURITY

Your security is volatile, based on the movements of your enemy.

You are always wondering what he is up to.

You seek self-justification and validation from the like-minded.

GUIDANCE

You are counter-dependently guided by your enemy's actions.

You make your decisions based on what will thwart your enemy.

WISDOM

Your judgment is narrow and distorted.

You are defensive, over-reactive, and often paranoid.

POWER

The little power you do have comes from anger, envy, resentment, and vengeance -- negative energy that shrivels and destroys, leaving energy for little else.

* * *

If you are Church Centered...

SECURITY

Your security is based on church activity and on the esteem in which you are held by those in authority or influence in the church.

You find identity and security in religious labels and comparisons.

GUIDANCE

You are guided by how others will evaluate your actions in the context of church teachings and expectations.

WISDOM

You see the world in terms of "believers" and "non-believers," "belongers" and "non-belongers."

POWER

Perceived power comes from your church position or role.

* * *

If you are Self-Centered...

SECURITY

Your security is constantly changing and shifting.

GUIDANCE

Your judgment criteria are: "If it feels good..." "What I want." "What I need." "What's in it for me?"

WISDOM

You view the world by how decisions, events, or circumstances will affect you.

POWER

Your ability to act is limited to your own resources, without the benefits of interdependency.

More often than not, a person's center is some combination of these and/or other centers. Most people are very much a function of a variety of influences that play upon their lives. Depending on external or internal conditions, one particular center may be activated until the underlying needs are satisfied. Then another center becomes the compelling force.

As a person fluctuates from one center to another, the resulting relativism is like roller coasting through life. One moment you're high, the next moment you're low, making efforts to compensate for one weakness by borrowing strength from another weakness. There is no consistent sense of direction, no persistent wisdom, no steady power supply or sense of personal, intrinsic worth and identity.

The ideal, of course, is to create one clear center from which you consistently derive a high degree of security, guidance, wisdom, and power, empowering your proactivity and giving congruency and harmony to every part of your life.

A Principle Center

By centering our lives on correct principles, we create a solid foundation for development of the four life-support factors

Our security comes from knowing that, unlike other centers based on people or things which are subject to frequent and immediate change, correct principles do not change. We can depend on them

Principles don't react to anything. They won't divorce us or run away with our best friend. They aren't out to get us. They can't pave our way with shortcuts and quick fixes. They don't depend on the behavior of others, the environment, or the current fad for their validity. Principles don't die. They aren't here one day and gone the next. They can't be destroyed by fire, earthquake, or theft.

Principles are deep, fundamental truths, classic truths, generic common denominators. They are tightly interwoven threads running with exactness, consistency, beauty, and strength through the fabric of life.

Even in the midst of people or circumstances that seem to ignore the principles, we can be secure in the knowledge that principles are bigger than people or circumstances, and that thousands of years of history have seen them triumph, time and time again. Even more important, we can be secure in the knowledge that we can validate them in our own lives, by our own experience.

Admittedly, we're not omniscient. Our knowledge and understanding of correct principles is limited by our own lack of awareness of our true nature and the world around us and by the flood of trendy philosophies and theories that are not in harmony with correct principles. These ideas will have their season of acceptance, but, like many before them, they won't endure because they're built on false foundations.

We are limited, but we can push back the borders of our limitations. An understanding of the principle of our own growth enables us to search out correct principles with the confidence that the more we learn, the more clearly we can focus the lens through which we see the world. The principles don't change; our understanding of them does.

The wisdom and guidance that accompany Principle-Centered Living come from correct maps, from the way things really are, have been, and will be. Correct maps enable us to clearly see where we want to go and how to get there. We can make our decisions using the correct data that will make their implementation possible and meaningful.

The personal power that comes from Principle-Centered Living is the power of a self-aware, knowledgeable, proactive individual, unrestricted by the attitudes, behaviors, and actions of others or by many of the circumstances and environmental influences that limit other people.

The only real limitation of power is the natural consequences of the principles themselves. We are free to choose our actions, based on our knowledge of correct principles, but we are not free to choose the consequences of those actions. Remember, "If you pick up one end of the stick, you pick up the other."

Principles always have natural consequences attached to them. There are positive consequences when we live in harmony with the principles. There are negative consequences when we ignore them. But because these principles apply to everyone, whether or not they are aware, this limitation is universal. And the more we know of correct principles, the greater is our personal freedom to act wisely.

By centering our lives on timeless, unchanging principles, we create a fundamental paradigm of effective living. It is the center that puts all other centers in perspective.

If you are Principle Centered...

SECURITY

Your security is based on correct principles that do not change, regardless of external conditions or circumstances.

You know that true principles can repeatedly be validated in your own life, through your own experiences.

As a measurement of self-improvement, correct principles function with exactness, consistency, beauty and strength.

Correct principles help you understand your own development, endowing you with the confidence to learn more, thereby increasing your knowledge and understanding.

Your source of security provides you with an immovable, unchanging, unfailing core enabling you to see change as an exciting adventure and opportunity to make significant contributions.

GUIDANCE

You are guided by a compass which enables you to see where you want to go and how you will get there.

You use accurate data which makes your decisions both implementable and meaningful.

You stand apart from life's situations, and circumstances and look at the balanced whole. Your decisions and actions reflect both short and long-term considerations and implications.

In every situation, you consciously, proactively determine the best alternative, basing decisions on conscience educated by principles.

WISDOM

Your judgment encompasses a broad spectrum of long-term consequences and reflects a wise balance and quiet assurance.

You see things differently and thus you think and act differently from the largely reactive world.

You view the world through a fundamental paradigm for effective, provident living.

You see the world in terms of what you can do for the world and its people.

You adopt a proactive lifestyle, seeking to serve and build others.

You interpret all of life's experiences in terms of opportunities for learning and contribution.

POWER

Your power is limited only by your understanding and observance of natural law and correct principles and by the natural consequences of the principles themselves.

You become a self-aware, knowledgeable, proactive individual, largely unrestricted by the attitudes, behaviors, or actions of others.

Your ability to act reaches far beyond your own resources and encourages highly developed levels of interdependency.

Your decisions and actions are not driven by your current financial or circumstantial limitations. You experience an interdependent freedom.

Remember that your paradigm is the source from which your attitudes and behaviors flow. A paradigm is like a pair of glasses; it affects the way you see everything in your life. If you look at things through the paradigm of correct principles, what you see in life is dramatically different from what you see through any other centered paradigm.

I have included in the Appendix section of this book a detailed chart which shows how each center we've discussed might possibly affect the way you see everything else. But for a quick understanding of the difference your center makes, let's look at just one example of a specific problem as seen through the different paradigms. As you read, try to put on each pair of glasses. Try to feel the response that flows from the different centers.

Suppose tonight you have invited your wife to go to a concert. You have the tickets; she's excited about going. It's four o'clock in the afternoon.

All of a sudden, your boss calls you into his office and says he needs your help through the evening to get ready for an important meeting at 9 A.M. tomorrow.

If you're looking through spouse-centered or family-centered glasses, your main concern will be your wife. You may tell the boss you can't stay and you take her to the concert in an effort to please her. You may feel you have to stay to protect your job, but you'll do so grudgingly, anxious about her response, trying to justify your decision and protect yourself from her disappointment or anger.

If you're looking through a money-centered lens, your main thought will be of the overtime you'll get or the influence working late will have on a potential raise. You may call your wife and simply tell her you have to stay, assuming she'll understand that economic demands come first.

If you're work-centered, you may be thinking of the opportunity. You can learn more about the job.

You can make some points with the boss and further your career. You may give yourself a pat on the back for putting hours well beyond what is required, evidence of what a hard worker you are. Your wife should be proud of you!

If you're possession-centered, you might be thinking of the things the overtime income could buy. Or you might consider what an asset to your reputation at the office it would be if you stayed. Everyone would hear tomorrow how noble, how sacrificing and dedicated you are.

If you're pleasure-centered, you'll probably can the work and go to the concert, even if your wife would be happy for you to work late. You deserve a night out!

If you're friend-centered, your decision would be influenced by whether or not you had invited friends to attend the concert with you. Or whether your friends at work were going to stay late, too.

If you're enemy-centered, you may stay late because you know it will give you a big edge over that person in the office who thinks he's the company's greatest asset. While he's off having fun, you'll be working and slaving, doing his work and yours, sacrificing your personal pleasure for the good of the company he can so blithely ignore.

If you're church-centered, you might be influenced by plans other church members have to attend the concert, by whether or not any church members work at your office, or by the nature of the concert -- Handel's Messiah might rate higher in priority than a rock concert. Your decision might also be affected by what you think a "good church member" would do and by whether you view the extra work as "service" or "seeking after material wealth."

If you're self-centered, you'll be focused on what will do you the most good. Would it be better for you to go out for the evening? Or would it be better for you to make a few points with the boss? How the different options affect you will be your main concern.

As we consider various ways of looking at a single event, is it any wonder that we have "young lady/old lady" perception problems in our interactions with each other? Can you see how fundamentally our centers affect us? Right down to our motivations, our daily decisions, our actions (or, in too many cases, our reactions), our interpretations of events? That's why understanding your own center is so important. And if that center does not empower you as a proactive person, it becomes fundamental to your effectiveness to make the necessary Paradigm Shifts to create a center that will.

As a principle-centered person, you try to stand apart from the emotion of the situation and from other factors that would act on you, and evaluate the option. Looking at the balanced whole -- the work needs, the family needs, other needs that may be involved and the possible implications of the various alternative decisions -- you'll try to come up with the best solution, taking all factors into consideration.

Whether you go to the concert or stay and work is really a small part of an effective decision. You might make the same choice with a number of other centers. But there are several important differences when you are coming from a principle-centered paradigm. First, you are not being acted upon by other people or circumstances. You are proactively choosing what you determine to be the best alternative. You make your decisions consciously and knowledgeably.

Second, you know your decision is most effective because it is based on principles with predictable long-term results.

Third, what you choose to do contributes to your ultimate values in life. Staying at work to get the edge on someone at the office is an entirely different evening in your life from staying because you value your boss's effectiveness and you genuinely want to contribute to the company's welfare. The experiences you have as you carry out your decisions take on quality and meaning in the context of your life as a whole.

Fourth, you can communicate to your wife and your boss within strong networks you've created in your interdependent relationships. Because you are independent, you can be effectively interdependent. You might decide to delegate what is delegable and come in early the next morning

to do the rest.

And finally, you'll feel comfortable about your decision. Whatever you choose to do, you can focus on it and enjoy it.

As a principle-centered person, you see things differently. And because you see things differently, you think differently, you act differently. Because you have a high degree of security, guidance, wisdom, and power that flows from a solid, unchanging core, you have the foundation of a highly proactive and highly effective life.

Writing and Using a Personal Mission Statement

As we go deeply within ourselves, as we understand and realign our basic paradigms to bring them in harmony with correct principles, we create both an effective, empowering center and a clear lens through which we can see the world. We can then focus that lens on how we, as unique individuals, relate to that world

Frankl says we detect rather than invent our missions in life. I like that choice of words. I think each of us has an internal monitor or sense, a conscience, that gives us an awareness of our own uniqueness and the singular contributions that we can make. In Frankl's words, "Everyone has his own specific vocation or mission in life. Therein he cannot be replaced, nor can his life be repeated. Thus, everyone's task is as unique as is his specific opportunity to implement it."

In seeking to give verbal expression to that uniqueness, we are again reminded of the fundamental importance of proactivity and of working within our Circle of Influence. To seek some abstract meaning to our lives out in our Circle of Concern is to abdicate our proactive responsibility, to place our own first creation in the hands of circumstance and other people.

Our meaning comes from within. Again, in the words of Frankl, "Ultimately, man should not ask what the meaning of his life is, but rather must recognize that it is he who is asked. In a word, each man is questioned by life; and he can only answer to life by answering for his own life; to life he can only respond by being responsible."

Personal responsibility, or proactivity, is fundamental to the first creation. Returning to the computer metaphor, Habit 1 says "You are the programmer." Habit 2, then, says, "Write the program." Until you accept the idea that you are responsible, that you are the programmer, you won't really invest in writing the program.

As proactive people , we can begin to give expression to what we want to be and to do in our lives. We can write a personal mission statement, a personal constitution.

A mission statement is not something you write overnight. It takes deep introspection, careful analysis, thoughtful expression, and often many rewrites to produce it in final form. It may take you several weeks or even months before you feel really comfortable with it, before you feel it is a complete and 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 additional insights or changing circumstances.

But fundamentally, your mission statement becomes your constitution, the solid expression of your vision and values. It becomes the criterion by which you measure everything else in your life.

I recently finished reviewing my own mission statement, which I do fairly regularly. Sitting on the edge of a beach, alone, at the end of a bicycle ride, I took out my organizer and hammered it out. It took several hours, but I felt a sense of clarity, a sense of organization and commitment, a sense of exhilaration and freedom.

I find the process is as important as the product. Writing or reviewing a mission statement changes you because it forces you to think through your priorities deeply, carefully, and to align your behavior with your beliefs. As you do, other people begin to sense that you're not being driven by everything that happens to you. You have a sense of mission about what you're trying to do and you are excited

about it.

Using Your Whole Brain

Our self-awareness empowers us to examine our own thoughts. This is particularly helpful in creating a personal mission statement because the two unique human endowments that enable us to practice Habit 2 -- imagination and conscience -- are primarily functions of the right side of the brain. Understanding how to tap into that right brain capacity greatly increases our first-creation ability.

A great deal of research has been conducted for decades on what has come to be called brain dominance theory. The findings basically indicated that each hemisphere of the brain -- left and right -- tends to specialize in and preside over different functions, process different kinds of information, and deal with different kinds of problems.

Essentially, the left hemisphere is the more logical/verbal one and the right hemisphere the more intuitive, creative one. The left deals with words, the right with pictures; the left with parts and specifics, the right with wholes and the relationship between the parts. The left deals with analysis, which means to break apart; the right with synthesis, which means to put together. The left deals with sequential thinking; the right with simultaneous and holistic thinking. The left is time bound; the right is time free.

Although people use both sides of the brain, one side or the other generally tends to be dominant in each individual. Of course, the ideal would be to cultivate and develop the ability to have good crossover between both sides of the brain so that a person could first sense what the situation called for and then use the appropriate tool to deal with it. But people tend to stay in the "comfort zone" of their dominant hemisphere and process every situation according to either a right- or left-brain preference.

In the words of Abraham Maslow, "He that is good with a hammer tends to think everything is a nail." This is another factor that affects the "young lady/old lady" perception difference. Right-brain and left-brain people tend to look at things in different ways.

We live in a primarily left-brain-dominant world, where words and measurement and logic are enthroned, and the more creative, intuitive, sensing, artistic aspect of our nature is often subordinated. Many of us find it more difficult to tap into our right-brain capacity.

Admittedly this description is oversimplified and new studies will undoubtedly throw more light on brain functioning. But the point here is that we are capable of performing many different kinds of thought processes and we barely tap our potential. As we become aware of its different capacities, we can consciously use our minds to meet specific needs in more effective ways.

Two Ways to Tap the Right Brain

If we use the brain dominance theory as a model, it becomes evident that the quality of our first creation is significantly impacted by our ability to use our creative right brain. The more we are able to draw upon our right-brain capacity, the more fully we will be able to visualize, to synthesize, to transcend time and present circumstances, to project a holistic picture of what we want to do and to be in life.

Expand Perspective

Sometimes we are knocked out of our left-brain environment and thought patterns and into the right brain by an unplanned experience. The death of a loved one, a severe illness, a financial setback, or extreme adversity can cause us to stand back, look at our lives, and ask ourselves some hard questions:

"What's really important? Why am I doing what I'm doing?

But if you're proactive, you don't have to wait for circumstances or other people to create perspective-expanding experiences. You can consciously create your own.

There are a number of ways to do this. Through the powers of your imagination, you can visualize your own funeral, as we did at the beginning of this chapter. Write your own eulogy. Actually write it out. Be specific.

You can visualize your twenty-fifth and then your fiftieth wedding anniversary. Have your spouse visualize this with you. Try to capture the essence of the family relationship you want to have created through your day-by-day investment over a period of that many years.

You can visualize your retirement from your present occupation. What contributions, what achievements will you want to have made in your field? What plans will you have after retirement? Will you enter a second career?

Expand your mind. Visualize in rich detail. Involve as many emotions and feelings as possible. Involve as many of the senses as you can.

I have done similar visualization exercises with some of my university classes. "Assume you only have this one semester to live," I tell my students, "and that during this semester you are to stay in school as a good student. Visualize how you would spend your semester.

Things are suddenly placed in a different perspective. Values quickly surface that before weren't even recognized.

I have also asked students to live with that expanded perspective for a week and keep a diary of their experiences.

The results are very revealing. They start writing to parents to tell them how much they love and appreciate them. They reconcile with a brother, a sister, a friend where the relationship has deteriorated.

The dominant, central theme of their activities, the underlying principle, is love. The futility of bad-mouthing, bad thinking, put-downs, and accusation becomes very evident when they think in terms of having only a short time to live. Principles and values become more evident to everybody.

There are a number of techniques using your imagination that can put you in touch with your values. But the net effect of every one I have ever used is the same. When people seriously undertake to identify what really matters most to them in their lives, what they really want to be and to do, they become very reverent. They start to think in larger terms than today and tomorrow.

Visualization and Affirmation

Personal leadership is not a singular experience. It doesn't begin and end with the writing of a personal mission statement. It is, rather, the ongoing process of keeping your vision and values before you and aligning your life to be congruent with those most important things. And in that effort, your powerful right-brain capacity can be a great help to you on a daily basis as you work to integrate your personal mission statement into your life. It's another application of "Begin with the End in Mind."

Let's go back to an example we mentioned before. Suppose I am a parent who really deeply loves my children. Suppose I identify that as one of my fundamental values in my personal mission statement. But suppose, on a daily basis, I have trouble overreacting.

I can use my right-brain power of visualization to write an "affirmation" that will help me become more congruent with my deeper values in my daily life.

A good affirmation has five basic ingredients: it's personal, it's positive, it's present tense, it's visual, and it's emotional. So I might write something like this: "It is deeply satisfying (emotional) that I (personal) respond (present tense) with wisdom, love, firmness, and self-control (positive) when my children misbehave."

Then I can visualize it. I can spend a few minutes each day and totally relax my mind and body. I can think about situations in which my children might misbehave. I can visualize them in rich detail. I can feel the texture of the chair I might be sitting on, the floor under my feet, the sweater I'm wearing. I can see the dress my daughter has on, the expression on her face. The more clearly and vividly I can imagine the detail, the more deeply I will experience it, the less I will see it as a spectator.

Then I can see her do something very specific which normally makes my heart pound and my temper start to flare. But instead of seeing my normal response, I can see myself handle the situation with all the love, the power, the self-control I have captured in my affirmation. I can write the program, write the script, in harmony with my values, with my personal mission statement.

And if I do this, day after day my behavior will change. Instead of living out of the scripts given to me by my own parents or by society or by genetics or my environment, I will be living out of the script I have written from my own self-selected value system.

I have helped and encouraged my son, Sean, to use this affirmation process extensively throughout his football career. We started when he played quarterback in high school, and eventually, I taught him how to do it on his own.

We would try to get him in a very relaxed state of mind through deep breathing and progressive muscle relaxation technique so that he became very quiet inside. Then I would help him visualize himself right in the heat of the toughest situations imaginable.

He would imagine a big blitz coming at him fast. He had to read the blitz and respond. He would imagine giving audibles at the line after reading defenses. He would imagine quick reads with his first receiver, his second receiver, his third receiver. He would imagine options that he normally wouldn't do.

At one point in his football career, he told me he was constantly getting uptight. As we talked, I realized that he was visualizing uptightness. So we worked on visualizing relaxation in the middle of the big pressure circumstance. We discovered that the nature of the visualization is very important. If you visualize the wrong thing, you'll produce the wrong thing.

Dr. Charles Garfield has done extensive research on peak performers, both in athletics and in business. He became fascinated with peak performance in his work with the NASA program, watching the astronauts rehearse everything on earth again and again in a simulated environment before they went to space. Although he had a doctorate in mathematics, he decided to go back and get another Ph.D. in the field of psychology and study the characteristics of peak performers.

One of the main things his research showed was that almost all of the world-class athletes and other peak performers are visualizers. They see it; they feel it; they experience it before they actually do it. They Begin with the End in Mind.

You can do it in every area of your life. Before a performance, a sales presentation, a difficult confrontation, or the daily challenge of meeting a goal, see it clearly, vividly, relentlessly, over and over again. Create an internal "comfort zone." Then, when you get into the situation, it isn't foreign. It doesn't scare you.

Your creative, visual right brain is one of your most important assets, both in creating your personal mission statement and in integrating it into your life.

There is an entire body of literature and audio and video tapes that deals with this process of visualization and affirmation. Some of the more recent developments in this field include such things as subliminal programming, neurolinguistic programming, and new forms of relaxation and self-talk processes. These all involve explanation, elaboration, and different packaging of the fundamental principles of the first creation.

My review of the success literature brought me in contact with hundreds of books on this subject. Although some made extravagant claims and relied on anecdotal rather than scientific evidence, I think that most of the material is fundamentally sound. The majority of it appears to have originally come

out of the study of the Bible by many individuals.

In effective personal leadership, visualization and affirmation techniques emerge naturally out of a foundation of well thought through purposes and principles that become the center of a person's life. They are extremely powerful in scripting and reprogramming, into writing deeply committed-to purposes and principles into one's heart and mind. I believe that central to all enduring religions in society are the same principles and practices clothed in different language -- meditation, prayer, covenants, ordinances, scripture study, empathy, compassion, and many different forms of the use of both conscience and imagination.

But if these techniques become part of the personality ethic and are severed from a base of character and principles, they can be misused and abused in serving other centers, primarily the self center.

Affirmation and visualization are forms of programming, and we must be certain that we do not submit ourselves to any programming that is not in harmony with our basic center or that comes from sources centered on money-making, self interest, or anything other than correct principles.

The imagination can be used to achieve the fleeting success that comes when a person is focused on material gain or on "what's in it for me." But I believe the higher use of imagination is in harmony with the use of conscience to transcend self and create a life of contribution based on unique purpose and on the principles that govern interdependent reality.

Identifying Roles and Goals

Of course, the logical/verbal left brain becomes important also as you attempt to capture your right-brain images, feelings, and pictures in the words of a written mission statement. Just as breathing exercises help integrate body and mind, writing is a kind of psycho-neural muscular activity which helps bridge and integrate the conscious and subconscious minds. Writing distills, crystallizes, and clarifies thought and helps break the whole into parts.

We each have a number of different roles in our lives -- different areas or capacities in which we have responsibility. I may, for example, have a role as an individual, a husband, a father, a teacher, a church member, and a businessman. And each of these roles is important.

One of the major problems that arises when people work to become more effective in life is that they don't think broadly enough. They lose the sense of proportion, the balance, the natural ecology necessary to effective living. They may get consumed by work and neglect personal health. In the name of professional success, they may neglect the most precious relationships in their lives.

You may find that your mission statement will be much more balanced, much easier to work with, if you break it down into the specific role areas of your life and the goals you want to accomplish in each area. Look at your professional role. You might be a salesperson, or a manager, or a product developer. What are you about in that area? What are the values that should guide you? Think of your personal roles -- husband, wife, father, mother, neighbor, friend. What are you about in those roles? What's important to you? Think of community roles -- the political area, public service, volunteer organizations.

One executive has used the idea of roles and goals to create the following mission statement:

My mission is to live with integrity and to make a difference in the lives of others.

To fulfill this mission:

I have charity: I seek out and love the one -- each one -- regardless of his situation.

I sacrifice: I devote my time, talents, and resources to my mission.

I inspire: I teach by example that we are all children of a loving Heavenly Father and that every Goliath can be overcome.

I am impactful: What I do makes a difference in the lives of others.

These roles take priority in achieving my mission:

Husband -- my partner is the most important person in my life. Together we contribute the fruits of harmony, industry, charity, and thrift.

Father -- I help my children experience progressively greater joy in their lives.

Son/Brother -- I am frequently "there" for support and love.

Christian -- God can count on me to keep my covenants and to serve his other children.

Neighbor -- The love of Christ is visible through my actions toward others.

Change Agent -- I am a catalyst for developing high performance in large organizations.

Scholar -- I learn important new things every day.

Writing your mission in terms of the important roles in your life gives you balance and harmony. It keeps each role clearly before you. You can review your roles frequently to make sure that you don't get totally absorbed by one role to the exclusion of others that are equally or even more important in your life.

After you identify your various roles, then you can think about the Long Term Goals are plans you make that support the principles described in your Mission Statement. These goals should represent areas you want to focus on in the near future. Typically, Long Term Goals take longer than a week to complete, but are more specific than the lifetime goals of your Mission Statement. long-term goals you want to accomplish in each of those roles. We're into the right brain again, using imagination, creativity, conscience, and inspiration. If these goals are the extension of a mission statement based on correct principles, they will be vitally different from the goals people normally set. They will be in harmony with correct principles, with natural laws, which gives you greater power to achieve them. They are not someone else's goals you have absorbed. They are your goals. They reflect your deepest values, your unique talent, your sense of mission. And they grow out of your chosen roles in life.

An effective goal focuses primarily on results rather than activity. It identifies where you want to be, and, in the process, helps you determine where you are. It gives you important information on how to get there, and it tells you when you have arrived. It unifies your efforts and energy. It gives meaning and purpose to all you do. And it can finally translate itself into daily activities so that you are proactive, you are in charge of your life, you are making happen each day the things that will enable you to fulfill your personal mission statement.

Roles and goals give structure and organized direction to your personal mission. If you don't yet have a personal mission statement, it's a good place to begin. Just identifying the various areas of your life and the two or three important results you feel you should accomplish in each area to move ahead gives you an overall perspective of your life and a sense of direction.

As we move into Habit 3, we'll go into greater depth in the area of short-term goals. The important application at this point is to identify roles and long-term goals as they relate to your personal mission statement. These roles and long-term goals will provide the foundation for effective goal setting and achieving when we get to the Habit 3 day-to-day management of life and time.

Family Mission Statements

Because Habit 2 is based on principle, it has broad application. In addition to individuals, families, service groups, and organizations of all kinds become significantly more effective as they Begin with the End in Mind.

Many families are managed on the basis of crises, moods, quick fixes, and instant gratification -- not on sound principles. Symptoms surface whenever stress and pressure mount: people become cynical, critical, or silent or they start yelling and overreacting. Children who observe these kinds of behavior grow up thinking the only way to solve problems is flight or fight.

The core of any family is what is changeless, what is always going to be there -- shared vision and values. By writing a family mission statement, you give expression to its true foundation.

This mission statement becomes its constitution, the standard, the criterion for evaluation and decision making. It gives continuity and unity to the family as well as direction. When individual values are harmonized with those of the family, members work together for common purposes that are deeply felt.

Again, the process is as important as the product. The very process of writing and refining a mission statement becomes a key way to improve the family. Working together to create a mission statement builds the PC capacity to live it.

By getting input from every family member, drafting a statement, getting feedback, revising it, and using wording from different family members, you get the family talking, communicating, on things that really matter deeply. The best mission statements are the result of family members coming together in a spirit of mutual respect, expressing their different views, and working together to create something greater than any one individual could do alone. Periodic review to expand perspective, shift emphasis or direction, amend or give new meaning to time-worn phrases can keep the family united in common values and purposes.

The mission statement becomes the framework for thinking, for governing the family. When the problems and crises come, the constitution is there to remind family members of the things that matter most and to provide direction for problem solving and decision making based on correct principles.

In our home, we put our mission statement up on a wall in the family room so that we can look at it and monitor ourselves daily. When we read the phrases about the sounds of love in our home, order, responsible independence, cooperation, helpfulness, meeting needs, developing talents, showing interest in each other's talents, and giving service to others it gives us some criteria to know how we're doing in the things that matter most to us as a family.

When we plan our family goals and activities, we say, "In light of these principles, what are the goals we're going to work on? What are our action plans to accomplish our goals and actualize these values?"

We review the statement frequently and rework goals and jobs twice a year, in September and June -- the beginning of school and the end of school -- to reflect the situation as it is, to improve it, to strengthen it. It renews us, it recommits us to what we believe in, what we stand for.

Organizational Mission Statements

Mission statements are also vital to successful organizations. One of the most important thrusts of my work with organizations is to assist them in developing effective mission statements. And to be effective, that statement has to come from within the bowels of the organization. Everyone should participate in a meaningful way -- not just the top strategy planners, but everyone. Once again, the involvement process is as important as the written product and is the key to its use.

I am always intrigued whenever I go to IBM and watch the training process there. Time and time again, I see the leadership of the organization come into a group and say that IBM stands for three things: the dignity of the individual, excellence, and service.

These things represent the belief system of IBM. Everything else will change, but these three things will not change. Almost like osmosis, this belief system has spread throughout the entire organization, providing a tremendous base of shared values and personal security for everyone who works there.

Once I was training a group of people for IBM in New York. It was small group, about 20 people, and one of them became ill. He called his wife in California, who expressed concern because his illness required a special treatment. The IBM people responsible for the training session arranged to have him taken to an excellent hospital with medical specialists in the disease. But they could sense that his wife was uncertain and really wanted him home where their personal physician could handle the problem.

So they decided to get him home. Concerned about the time involved in driving him to the airport

and waiting for a commercial plane, they brought in a helicopter, flew him to the airport, and hired a special plane just to take this man to California.

I don't know what costs that involved; my guess would be many thousands of dollars. But IBM believes in the dignity of the individual. That's what the company stands for. To those present, that experience represented its belief system and was no surprise. I was impressed.

At another time, I was scheduled to train 175 shopping center managers at a particular hotel. I was amazed at the level of service there. It wasn't a cosmetic thing. It was evident at all levels, spontaneously, without supervision.

I arrived quite late, checked in, and asked if room service were available. The man at the desk said, "No, Mr. Covey, but if you're interested, I could go back and get a sandwich or a salad or whatever you'd like that we have in the kitchen." His attitude was one of total concern about my comfort and welfare. "Would you like to see your convention room?" he continued. "Do you have everything you need? What can I do for you? I'm here to serve you."

There was no supervisor there checking up. This man was sincere.

The next day I was in the middle of a presentation when I discovered that I didn't have all the colored markers I needed. So I went out into the hall during the brief break and found a bellboy running to another convention. "I've got a problem," I said. "I'm here training a group of managers and I only have a short break. I need some more colored pens."

He whipped around and almost came to attention. He glanced at my name tag and said, "Mr. Covey, I will solve your problem."

He didn't say, "I don't know where to go" or "well, go and check the front desk." He just took care of it. And he made me feel like it was his privilege to do so.

Later, I was in the side lobby, looking at some of the art objects. Someone from the hotel came up to me and said, "Mr. Covey, would you like to see a book that describes the art objects in this hotel?" How anticipatory! How service-oriented!

I next observed one of the employees high up on a ladder cleaning windows in the lobby. From his vantage point he saw a woman having a little difficulty in the garden with a walker. She hadn't really fallen, and she was with other people. But he climbed down that ladder, went outside, helped the woman into the lobby and saw that she was properly taken care of. Then he went back and finished cleaning the windows.

I wanted to find out how this organization had created a culture where people bought so deeply into the value of customer service. I interviewed housekeepers, waitresses, bellboys in that hotel and found that this attitude had impregnated the minds, hearts, and attitudes of every employee there.

I went through the back door into the kitchen, where I saw the central value: "Uncompromising personalized service." I finally went to the manager and said, "My business is helping organizations develop a powerful team character, a team culture. I am amazed at what you have here."

"Do you want to know the real key?" he inquired. He pulled out the mission statement for the hotel chain.

After reading it, I acknowledged, "That's an impressive statement. But I know many companies that have impressive mission statements."

"Do you want to see the one for this hotel?" he asked.

"Do you mean you developed one just for this hotel?"

"Yes."

"Different from the one for the hotel chain?"

"Yes. It's in harmony with that statement, but this one pertains to our situation, our environment, our time." He handed me another paper.

"Who developed this mission statement?" I asked.

"Everybody," he replied.

"Everybody? Really, everybody?"

"Yes."

"Housekeepers?"

"Yes."

"Waitresses?"

"Yes."

"Desk clerks?"

"Yes. Do you want to see the mission statement written by the people who greeted you last night?"

He pulled out a mission statement that they, themselves, had written that was interwoven with all the other mission statements. Everyone, at every level, was involved.

The mission statement for that hotel was the hub of a great wheel. It spawned the thoughtful, more specialized mission statements of particular groups of employees. It was used as the criterion for every decision that was made. It clarified what those people stood for -- how they related to the customer, how they related to each other. It affected the style of the managers and the leaders. It affected the compensation system. It affected the kind of people they recruited and how they trained and developed them. Every aspect of that organization, essentially, was a function of that hub, that mission statement.

I later visited another hotel in the same chain, and the first thing I did when I checked in was to ask to see their mission statement, which they promptly gave me. At this hotel, I came to understand the motto "Uncompromising personalized service" a little more.

For a three-day period, I watched every conceivable situation where service was called for. I always found that service was delivered in a very impressive, excellent way. But it was always also very personalized. For instance, in the swimming area I asked the attendant where the drinking fountain was. He walked me to it.

But the thing that impressed me the very most was to see an employee, on his own, admit a mistake to his boss. We ordered room service, and were told when it would be delivered to the room. On the way to our room, the room service person spilled the hot chocolate, and it took a few extra minutes to go back and change the linen on the tray and replace the drink. So the room service was about fifteen minutes late, which was really not that important to us.

Nevertheless, the next morning the room service manager phoned us to apologize and invited us to have either the buffet breakfast or a room service breakfast, compliments of the hotel, to in some way compensate for the inconvenience.

What does it say about the culture of an organization when an employee admits his own mistake, unknown to anyone else, to the manager so that customer or guest is better taken care of!

As I told the manager of the first hotel I visited, I know a lot of companies with impressive mission statements. But there is a real difference, all the difference in the world, in the effectiveness of a mission statement created by everyone involved in the organization and one written by a few top executives behind a mahogany wall.

One of the fundamental problems in organizations, including families, is that people are not committed to the determinations of other people for their lives. They simply don't buy into them.

Many times as I work with organizations, I find people whose goals are totally different from the goals of the enterprise. I commonly find reward systems completely out of alignment with stated value systems.

When I begin work with companies that have already developed some kind of mission statement, I ask them, "How many of the people here know that you have a mission statement? How many of you know what it contains? How many were involved in creating it? How many really buy into it and use it as your frame of reference in making decisions?"

Without involvement, there is no commitment. Mark it down, asterisk it, circle it, underline it.