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<div align="center">Response to *7 Habits of Highly Effective People*</div>

I was struck by Thodori Kapouranis' explanation of *7 Habits of Highly Effective People* by Stephen R.

Covey. Honestly, I tend to avoid books with titles such as these, as I find them to be overly generic and

difficult to apply in life. I don't think that this book is much different – the provided advice is still very

generic, but the words are fairly striking. They make a lot of sense, and thus resonate with me. Whether

or not I will find the willpower to implement these changes in my life will be a different story, but I

hope I will be able to in the coming years. Covey promotes seven "habits," which I will review below

and discuss why they are relevant to my life:

1. **Be proactive**. I pretty much suck at this. My life has thus far been dominated by deadlines, and

    in particular school deadlines. There is little incentive (at least for grades) to be proactive, and

    many students, including myself, fall into the trap of not moving until the last moment possible.

    Worse, it's easy to rationalize distracting behaviors in various ways; video games may be

    considered a sort of mental health break, but we may choose to take other kinds of breaks that

    may relieve the stress from school while also improving ourselves in other ways. As Thodoris

    states, "we have the freedom to choose our responses based on our self-awareness, conscience,

    will, and the predicted outcomes of our actions" – we need to choose actions based on what is

    most important.

2. **Begin with the end in mind**. The big picture. Realizing that a current failure is, in the long run,

    nothing compared to the more important things in life. That we can move on despite getting a

    rejection from a college, job, or romantic partner. Or realizing that a particular venture that you

    worked so hard on helped you but is not worth pursuing further due to diminishing returns or

    such. For example, I have believed up until this point that my studies have been the most

important investment of my time, but am starting to realize that this is only a step towards greater happiness and enlightenment and social good.

3. **Put first things first**. This habit is the one that stuck with me most. It has a lot to do with the first two habits, and is illustrated by a two-axis table: urgent/not urgent, and important/not important. To be most effective, we need to shift from doing urgent and not important activities to urgent and important activities. If the big picture is in mind, we won't mind that some of the not important activities are unfulfilled. Unfortunately, with schoolwork bombarding us with assignments, each of them seeming more important than the last, it's very easy to become caught up with things that are unimportant in the long run.

4. **Think win-win**. I really like this habit. This is a way to become a better person to others in a single step. It speaks about compromise and the fact that what may benefit one person may also benefit others, and that we should always be striving towards these kinds of solutions. However, as Thodoris notes, this may not always work, such as in competitive environments like sports.

5. **Seek first to understand, then to be understood**. I think I already do this to some extent in an academic context, although I am not as good at empathizing with others. It is always important to be able to understand the other side before attempting to impose your views on others. Often, you will hear interesting perspectives that were foreign and interesting to you.

6. **Synergize**. I feel that this one goes hand-in-hand with "think win-win."

7. **Sharpen the saw**. This is something that my parents have been trying to drill into me since the beginning. Well-roundedness is an important life skill because it will get you through the tough obstacles along the way. Even if you are in a highly intellectual environment, keeping up your physical health is important as a basic requirement, and vice versa. The same is true with spiritual and social needs. In a way, this is like fulfilling the basic needs of Maslow's hierarchy of needs triangle.