

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

– By Stephen R Covey

Summarized by: Jonas Salzgeber

Reading Time Book: 10 hours

Reading Time Summary: 44 minutes

Learn more about the author:

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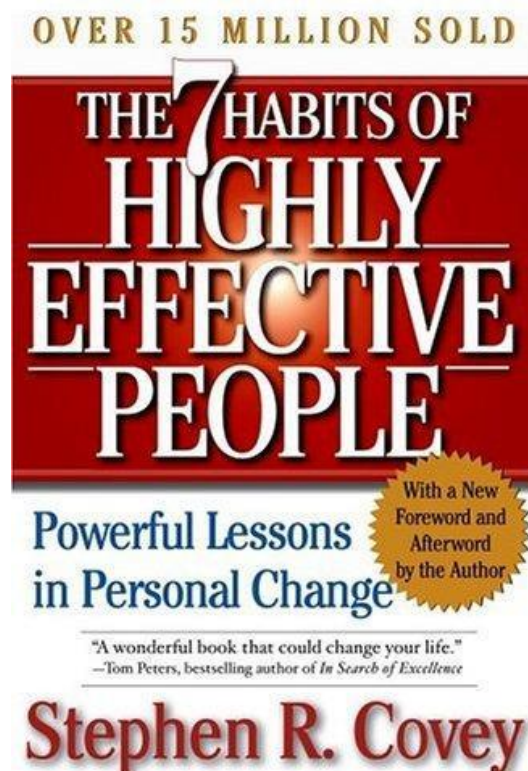


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The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People

Powerful Lessons in Personal Change

The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People embody many of the fundamental principles of human effectiveness. These habits are basic; they are primary. They represent the internalization of correct principles upon which enduring happiness and success are based.

Stephen Covey's bestselling book *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People – Powerful Lessons in Personal Change* was named the No. 1 most influential business book of the 20th century and has sold over 15 million copies. As its name reveals, it's a book about change – changing yourself to become more effective in every area of your life.

The main idea of the book is to develop your character to become more effective in life. **Develop yourself and grow as a person.** You'll learn about 7 Habits that the world's most effective people live by. These Habits are valid in all life situations. Basically, the book is about self-mastery and ultimately about mastery in dealing with others. Covey claims that in order to succeed in life you need to have a strong character you can rely on.

The book and this summary are split up into 4 parts:

- In Part 1 we'll look at what *effective* means, the importance of character and how we perceive the world.
- Part 2 is about **Private Victory** – conquer yourself before you tackle the world. We'll learn about the first 3 Habits in this part.
- In Part 3 we'll discuss how to use your character to become effective in dealing with others – let's conquer **Public Victory**. That'll include Habits 4-6.
- In Part 4 we'll look at Habit 7 and how to constantly improve ourselves.

Are you ready to learn how to grow a strong and successful character?

Alright then, let's ~~get started~~ become HIGHLY EFFECTIVE!

Part 1: Getting Started

Alright then, let's get started.

This part is a quickie...

You'll learn what Stephen Covey means with *effective*. Then we'll look at the inside-out approach and why your perceptions are KEY for personal change...

What Means Effective Anyway?

True effectiveness is a function of two things: what is produced (the golden eggs) and the producing asset or capacity to produce (the goose).

Here's the fable with the goose that lays golden eggs:

A poor farmer one day finds that his goose laid a golden egg. He's super happy. The next day the goose laid another golden egg. And the next day again. The farmer can't believe his good fortune. Every morning he rushes to see whether there's another golden egg. He's never disappointed. So, he becomes fabulously wealthy.

With increasing wealth comes greed and impatience. The farmer can't wait day after day for the golden eggs, so he decides to kill the goose to get all the golden eggs at once. Yet there are no golden eggs inside the goose. So, he ends up with a dead goose and no golden eggs. The farmer killed the goose that produced them.

Effectiveness lies in the balance – what I call the P/PC Balance. *P* stands for *production* of desired results, the golden eggs. *PC* stands for *production capability*, the ability or asset that produces the golden eggs.

So, effectiveness lies in the balance. The balance between what you **actually produce** and what you are **capable to produce**.

Covey states that in modern life many people fail at finding that balance. They work a lot and achieve a high degree of outward success, but they struggle in private life. They struggle with relationships, health, and deep and lasting happiness.

These people lay many golden eggs but slowly kill the goose as they're not looking after it. They may not realize that they're the goose themselves...

The quintessence is that in order to be highly effective in life we must find the balance between work and taking care of ourselves.

That's what we'll learn with the 7 Habits...

The Inside-Out Approach: Your Character Matters Most

“Inside-out” means to start first with self; even more fundamentally, to start with the most inside part of self – with your paradigms, your character, and your motives.

The inside-out approach says that private victories precede public victories, that making and keeping promises to ourselves precedes making and keeping promises to others. It says it is futile ... to try to improve relationships with others before improving ourselves.

Inside-out means to start first with *self*.

That’s where we start right now. You start with your **self**, I start with my **self**.

Covey claims that we must realize that before we can change anything in our lives, we have to change ourselves. And become a better person in character. It is our character that shines through in all life situations.

What you are shouts so loudly in my ears I cannot hear what you say. – Ralph Waldo Emerson

If you want to change, no matter what, it’s CRUCIAL to start with yourself first. You may want to change your looks, then it’s obvious to start with yourself. However, when you want to change your spouse or your kids or how your boss treats you etc., then it’s still important to start with yourself first.

Basically, if you want to change any situation, you need to go inside yourself first.

How can **you** be different to change the situation? How could **you** change something first? What could **you** change within yourself to change your boss’ behavior?

Now, how can you do that?

Well, that’s what the 2nd Part will be all about.

First, though, you need to learn what the KEY to successful personal change is...

How Your Perceptions Shape Your Life

We simply *assume* that the way we see things is the way they really are or the way they should be.

And our attitudes and behaviors grow out of those assumptions. The way we see things is the source of the way we think and the way we act.

This is critical.

In short: The way we see things determines our thoughts and actions.

Let's make an example of **wealth**. When I grew up I learned that rich people are filthy. That they became rich through cheating or being unfair and fake. That was my perception, my assumption of rich people. I thought that's how it is. And that assumption determined my actions... as I didn't want to become filthy, I couldn't become rich. Period.

Obviously, my assumption wasn't true. I was just conditioned that way and I had to see and learn other perceptions to change the way I was conditioned to believe.

This is important: It was not until I learned about other perceptions, and until I **changed** my own perception, that I could successfully change my thoughts and actions.

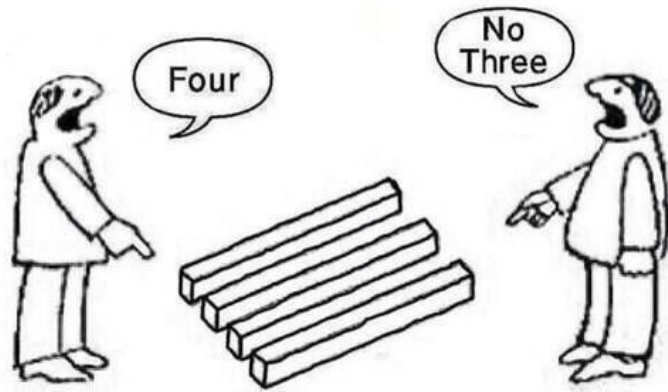
Each of us tends to think we see things as they are, that we are *objective*. But this is not the case. We see the world, not as *it is*, but as *we are* – or as we are conditioned to see it.

There are always more than one way to look at a situation. Just because I learned that rich people are filthy doesn't mean that they are. It may be true for a handful of people, but it's not generally true.

What you see, what you think to be true depends on where you're standing and on what you've learned and experienced.

You need to realize that whatever you perceive to be true, may not be perceived to be true for someone else.

Stephen Covey suggests staying open-minded and listening to other people's perceptions. That's how we can get a larger picture and a far more objective view.



So, the KEY to successful personal change is the realization of our perceptions. In order to change ourselves, we need to change our perceptions first.

It is impossible to change your thoughts, actions and behavior until you change your perception.

For instance, if you believe that your wall is white and there's a black stain on it, you will not stop trying to clean the black stain until you realize that actually the wall is black with white color on it. Suddenly, trying to clean the black "stain" seems stupid...

It's all a matter of perception.

We can complain because rose bushes have thorns, or rejoice because thorn bushes have roses. – Abraham Lincoln

Part 2:

Private Victory, Be the Master of Yourself

Cool!

You can tick the first part.

In the 2nd part we'll look at the first 3 Habits. They're all about mastering ourselves. Remember, we need to change from the inside-out...

Let's master ourselves.

Habit 1: Be Proactive

Be proactive?!

What should that mean?

It's about BEING IN CHARGE.

YOU are in charge of YOUR LIFE.

You are responsible for your life. You, and you alone, are responsible for your life. If you're successful, it's because of you. If you're struggling, it's because of you.

Look at the word *responsibility* – “response-ability” – the ability to choose your response.

Cool, right?

Being responsible means to be able to choose your response.

You choose how you respond/react to any situation (we'll look at some examples later).

Interestingly, the ability to choose our response separates us from animals. Animals are *reactive*, they *don't choose* their response, they *just react* to a certain stimulus the way they've been conditioned or the way it's instinctive to respond.

Let's look at an example together.

Have you heard of Pavlov's experiments with dogs?

The idea is that you can condition dogs to respond in a particular way to a particular stimulus. Basically, **a specific stimulus shall lead to a specific response.**

It's normal behavior of a dog to salivate when he sees food. And it's normal behavior of a dog *not* to salivate when he hears the ringing of a bell.

Now, when you serve the dog food *and* ring the bell at the same time, you condition him. If you do that several times the dog will salivate when he just hears the bell.

The dog is **conditioned** to link the bell to the food. He responds (salivation) to the stimulus (bell) automatically.

Between stimulus and response is our greatest power – the freedom to choose.

Good news: We are not like dogs, we CAN CHOOSE our response.

Whatever happens to you, you can choose your response. You are responsible.

- If your mum shouts at you, you are free to choose your response. You can either shout back, or smile and hug her, or apologize, or whatever you choose to respond.
- If you get cut off in traffic, you can either swear at the other driver or just relax and take it. You can CHOOSE.
- If an apple falls on your head, you can either be pissed and kick the apple away, or you can be grateful for the apple and eat it. YOU HAVE THE FREEDOM TO CHOOSE.

Again, we are responsible for our lives.

You are responsible for *your* life. *I* am responsible for *my* life.

Whether you kick away or eat the apple, you are responsible for what you do. You choose your response.

Now, let's look at some specific differences between **proactive** and **reactive** people...

Proactive People Take Responsibility

Highly proactive people recognize that responsibility. They do not blame circumstances for their behavior. Their behavior is a product of their own conscious choice.

You and I, we are proactive. And we recognize that we are responsible for our lives. WE ARE RESPONSIBLE, not our parents, not the weather, not other people, not the environment – we ourselves are responsible for our own lives.

We base our actions on decisions rather than conditions. We are at the steering wheel, we decide where to go and what to do.

Reactive people, on the other hand, don't take responsibility for their lives. They give responsibility to their environment.

They blame their parents for who they've become, they bitch about other people who destroyed their lives, they even blame the weather. If the weather does not please them, they feel shitty because of it. They blame the weather for how they feel and act... How pathetic is that?

In short:

- Proactive people feel responsible for their lives.
- Reactive people blame their environment for their lives.

You definitely want to be in charge of your life. Otherwise you have no control and live a reactive life much like the conditioned dog...

You choose!

OK, cool, proactive people take responsibility for their lives.

What else differentiates proactive from reactive people?

Proactive People Take Initiative

The difference between people who exercise initiative and those who don't is literally the difference between night and day.

Reactive people wait for things to happen, proactive people make things happen.

Don't be reactive and wait for someone to discover you, take initiative and do something about it. Make it happen. This is MASSIVELY important.

If you're proactive, you go and ask your favorite girl out. If you're reactive, you wait and hope for her to ask you...

Act or be acted upon – the choice is yours. Me, I choose to act!

What is your choice?

Act?

Congrats! Great choice.

In short:

- Proactive people take initiative and act.
- Reactive people wait and see and hope...

Be proactive and **create your own life**. Go and ask that girl out!

What more?

Proactive People Focus on the Things They CAN Do Something About

Another excellent way to become more self-aware regarding our own degree of proactivity is to look at where we focus our time and energy.

Look at what reactive people do...

- Reactive people bitch about the weather.
- Reactive people get depressed from the news.
- Reactive people whine about their neighbors.

Can they control the weather? No! Can they control their neighbors? Not directly. Can they control what happens in the Middle East? No.

As a proactive person, what would you do?

FOCUS on what you CAN CONTROL.

- If it's raining cats and dogs, we can focus on our own reaction – do we complain or take it as it is? We can't control the weather but **our response**.
- If the news is bad (it usually is), we can take it as it is and realize that we can't do anything about it, or we can stop watching it.
- If we hear the neighbors moaning day and night, instead of whining about it we can go talk to them, we can listen to music, or we can move the fck out...

Think about it: How limited is it to focus on things we cannot control? We will end up feeling like a powerless victim, depressed and completely dependent on what's out there.

Anytime we think the problem is "out there," that thought is the problem. We empower what's out there to control us. The change paradigm is "outside-in" – what's out there has to change before we can change.

The proactive approach is to change from the inside-out: to *be* different, and by being different, to effect positive change in what's out there – I can *be* more resourceful, I can *be* more diligent, I can *be* more creative, I can *be* more cooperative.

Reactive people empower what's out there to control them... so they have no fcking control over their lives. They feel powerless, wretched and get depressed.

Nobody wants that!

So, **be proactive** and focus on what you can control. What you can always control is YOURSELF. Focus on yourself. Change from the inside-out and be the creator of your life.

In short:

- Proactive people focus on what they can control.
- Reactive people whine, bitch and complain about what they cannot control.

Pay attention the next time you hear someone complaining. Ask yourself, can he control what he's bitching about?

The more aware you are of people complaining, the more likely you'll complain less. Whining less is a HUGE leap towards proactivity.

Quick Recap

Being proactive is about taking responsibility for your life.

Being proactive is about creating your own life. **You are the CREATOR of your life.**

YOU have the freedom to choose your response, no matter what happens. Don't blame others, don't blame circumstances for what happens in your life. You always have the power to choose your reaction.

As a proactive person you take initiative and make things happen instead of waiting and seeing... If you wait and see you will only find out that NOTHING will ever happen.

Last but not least, focus on what you CAN control. Don't live like a boneless victim who feels powerless due to having absolutely no control on what happens *out there*. Choose to focus on yourself, you can always work on yourself.

We are responsible for our own effectiveness, for our own happiness, and ultimately, I would say, for most of our circumstances.

Habit 2: Begin with the End in Mind

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.

Habit 2 is all about knowing where you want to go in life.

Remember, Habit 1 says you are the proactive creator of your life. Now, you need to know *what to create*...

Let's find out and jump right into a blood-curdling imagination.

Take a deep breathe before you read on.

Imagine you're going to a funeral of a loved one. Picture yourself driving there. You see the chapel and you feel the sad atmosphere of the funeral. 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. 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. All these people have come to honor you, to express feelings of love and appreciation for your life.

Whoo... creepy, right?

This is YOUR FUNERAL.

Now, this is a hyper powerful exercise:

Think deeply about what *you'd want* your friends, family, colleagues and others to say about you and your life. What would you like to hear them saying about you? What character would you like them to have seen in you? What contributions and achievements would you want them to remember? What difference would you like to have made in their lives?

What comes to your mind?

Positive? Reliable? Trustworthy? Good friend? Loving? Would always listen? Focused? Determined? Persistent? Hardworking? Energetic? Patient? Hmm? What do you want them to say about you?

Before you read further, take a few minutes to think about this scenario. This is a potent exercise and you will greatly benefit from it.

Done?

Great! Basically, what you want to hear is **your very own definition of success**. It's the kind of person you want to become. IT'S WHO YOU WANT TO BE. It's you being a "success".

Pretty cool, eh?

It gets even better!

As you know where you want to go and how you want to be, you make sure that what you do aligns with those things. With the destination in mind you automatically go in the right direction so that each day contributes meaningfully to what you want in life.

This is so good because many people just work hard and **get lost** in the hustle and bustle of life... and who wants to get lost?

So...

...Be a Leader and Know Where to Go

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.

What a great metaphor.

Climbing the ladder of success only to discover it's leaning against the wrong wall...

That's what happens if you don't have a clear end in mind, if you don't know where you want to go.

These people can climb as fast and as persistent as they want, they will never arrive at the right place, they will never achieve true success. I mean... they don't even know where they're going...

If you don't know where you're going, you might end up somewhere else.

– Yogi Berra

That's why you need to be a leader. A leader will first analyze the situation, the different walls and what's on top and on the other side, and then determine which wall to lean the ladder against.

This is far more effective than just climbing up any ladder and hope where you come up will be the right place.

Climbing the wrong wall can mean different things. It can mean that you just work but don't really know what you want in life. It can mean that you just do what other people want you to do. Or nowadays, it can mean that people are blinded by the materialistic bling-bling world:

People believe to know what they want: Fame, money, a Ferrari, a Rolex, and a Villa on the beach... while these things all sound great, they're in many cases the *wrong wall*. These people will achieve those things and find out that they're still not truly happy. And it gets worse: They've worked so hard for their success that they've neglected their family, friends, and health...

Who will go to their funeral? The Ferrari? The cleaning ladies? The neglected friends?

(By the way, I'm not saying that you cannot be climbing the right ladder *and* drive a Ferrari. I think you can, but you need to be a leader and think about where exactly you want to go. Think about the most important things in your life. Often, these are not material things but people.)

Real success is success with self. It's not in having things, but in having mastery, having victory over self. – Stephen Covey recording Anwar Sadat

To become a great leader Stephen Covey suggests identifying roles and goals so you know exactly where to lean your ladder against.

Identify Roles & Goals

We each have a number of different roles in our lives – different areas or capacities in which we have responsibilities. 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.

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.

That's clear.

Step 1: Identify your roles.

My roles are: Myself, son, brother, friend, colleague and businessman.

Step 2: Identify 2-3 goals for each role.

What is important in each role? Who do you want to be in each role? What results do you want to achieve in each role? What's the process?

This will give meaning and purpose to all you do. You will know what to create. This closes our loop.

Now you know what to create, and as a proactive person you can actually create that.

Remember, you are in charge of your life and you have the power to make these goals happen.

The goals you've identified provide the foundation for your effective day-to-day management you'll learn in Habit 3.

Let's dive right in...

Habit 3: Put First Things First

Putting first things first...

This is about prioritization and actualization.

You just identified your roles and goals, right?

Habit 3 now is all about making time AND executing these goals.

These goals are your **first things that you want to put first**.

You've probably identified your role as a son/daughter. A goal could be that you want to listen to your parents and spend time with them. Well, it's great that you've identified that, but it's CRUCIAL that you actually get it done.

The same holds true for other goals like working out, spending time with friends, finishing that project for work and whatever goals you have in mind.

It's the first step to lean the ladder against the right wall, and it's the next step to actually climb that ladder. That's another difficult step.

Think about it: How many people know what would be good for them?

- "I know, I should work out."
- "I know, I should eat healthy."
- "Yeah, I know I should spend more time with my kids..."

While many people already fail with knowing where to go, even more people fail with actually going there.

For instance, people know they should work out, but they don't work out. They rather do other things, easier things. It's a hell of a lot easier to watch TV than to work out. It's so much easier to *read* about identifying goals than to actually *write* them down. It's also easier to chill out with your flatmate than to take a bus to visit your grandma...

The successful person has the habit of doing the things failures don't like to do. They don't like doing them either necessarily. But their disliking is subordinated to the strength of their purpose. – E. M. Gray

So, that's what we'll learn right now:

How to get through with our most important tasks even if we don't feel like it.

How We Actually Spend Our Time

The first step to get first things done is to identify with what other things we actually spend our time.

Stephen Covey claims that we spend too much time just *reacting*. That means that we do what's URGENT. Here's a project that needs to be finished today, there's an email that needs to be handled right now, here's a colleague that needs help right now, there's a phone ringing... *KABOOM*

We do what needs to be done right now. In many cases we don't even care whether it's important or not – it's urgent and needs to be tackled right now.

He calls this *crisis management*. Just reacting to what happens and do what seems to be important right now. It's just doing things with a short-term focus. Eventually, he states, this will lead to stress or even burnout.

What people do when they're stressed out is spending time with easy and unimportant tasks like watching TV and checking Facebook.

So, that's how most people spend their time: Reacting to urgent matters until the batteries are empty. Then there's just enough energy to do easy, unimportant tasks...

Why We Spend Our Time Just Reacting

This is simple.

We spend our time reacting because that's just the path of least resistance. Urgent things come around the corner and say "Hey, I need to be tackled right now!" Then we just feel urged to do it right now. Whatever it is.

Let's say you're working on an important project when suddenly your phone rings. Your phone basically shouts "THIS IS URGENT, pick me up!" And what will you do? You will quit your important project in order to listen to your bragging friend talking about his first threesome...

Another example: You're in the office working on an important project when suddenly a colleague walks in your office and begs "Please buddy, come and help me with the printer. It doesn't work but I need to print RIGHT NOW!" What will you do? You will quit your important project in order to fix a fcking printer!? What are you... a repairman?

The quintessence is that we react to our environment because it's just the easiest and most natural way.

However, that way we'll never get the truly important tasks done. Because these tasks never seem urgent... until it's too late.

Let's look at possible FIRST THINGS:

- Building relationships
- Long-term planning
- Preventive maintenance like healthy eating and exercising

Now, these things NEVER seem to be urgent. You can always talk to your friends tomorrow. You can always plan your future tomorrow. You can always work out tomorrow.

Important matters that are not urgent require more initiative, more proactivity.

That's why many people fail in spending time with first things. These first things require more initiative and proactivity...

So, how can we get there?

How We Should Spend Our Time Instead

Instead of reacting to the impulse of the moment, we should act in accordance with our main goals.

So, first of all we need to know where we want to go and what our first things are. If you don't know what your first things are, go back to Habit 2. Or...

... ask yourself, what activities, if you would do them on a regular basis, would have the biggest impact on your life?

Covey suggests **scheduling** your first things.

Make time for them. Write them in your agenda.

- Write down that on Tuesday at 10a.m. you'll visit your grandma.
- Write down that on Wednesday at 6p.m. you work out.
- Write down that tonight at 11p.m. you write down your long-term goals.

That's the first step.

Now comes the harder part. You will actually need to go through with them. That'll need DISCIPLINE. It will always be easier to do urgent things and just react to your environment. However, the first things are super, hyper, and bloody important. Our effectiveness takes quantum leaps when we do them.

Covey does not have a magical recipe that helps us go through with important activities. Scheduling surely helps, but in the end it's just ourselves that need to get it done. And again, that's what separates successful people from losers. Losers get lost with urgent things while winners get first things done first.

"Time management" is really a misnomer – the challenge is not to manage time, but to manage ourselves.

In the end it's all about prioritizing your most important things and saying "no" to other, less important things.

Say "yes" to working out and "no" to the friend bragging about his threesome. Say "yes" to your important project and "no" to fixing the printer. Say "yes" to visiting your grandma and "no" to watching Games of Thrones.

Subordinate your feelings of giving in to easy tasks to your most important things.

Habit 3 says PUT FIRST THINGS FIRST.

Things which matter most must never be at the mercy of things which matter least. – Goethe

Part 3:

Public Victory, Master Relationships

Welcome to Part 3!

We're more than half through already.

And we've learned a lot so far. We've learned the first three Habits to master ourselves.

Now, we'll learn how to be effective in dealing with others. We'll look at Habits 4-6 to master our relationships.

Let's dive right in.

Habit 4: Think Win/Win

Let's make this a quickie.

And we both win...

Win/Win means that agreements or solutions are mutually beneficial, mutually satisfying. Win/Win sees life as a cooperative, not a competitive arena. Most people tend to think in terms of dichotomies: strong or weak, hardball or softball, win or lose. But that kind of thinking is fundamentally flawed. Win/Win is based on the paradigm that there is plenty for everybody, that one person's success is not achieved at the expense or exclusion of the success of others.

Habit 4 is about mutual benefits. 50:50. Both win. Both end up with more than before.

Win/Win can only occur when there is more than one group involved. So, it needs at least two people. Its idea is that both benefit mutually. That's the point.

Win/Win is not a technique; it's a total philosophy of human interaction.

You think Win/Win when you always seek **mutual benefit** in all your interactions with others. It is a belief: It's not your way or my way; it's a *better* way, a higher way.

Covey's idea is that there is NO OTHER OPTION than Win/Win except for No Deal. So, it's either Win/Win or No Deal.

It's a simple philosophy: Always seek for mutual beneficial cooperation.

The principle of Win/Win is fundamental to success in all our interactions.

Watch out!

Just to make that clear: It's not so easy... Don't just go, "Think Win/Win? Okay that's easy-peasy, on to the next one..."

There's a reason why the author included it in the 7 Habits. People often struggle with searching and finding mutual benefits. Covey sees the reason in our **competition society**. He claims that we've all been scripted to think Win/Lose. Everything is competitive: The grade system in school, judgment in sports, and also the law.

He states that we need to disassociate ourselves from those scripts and learn to think Win/Win.

And he tells us how.

Let's find out.

How to Develop the Win/Win Principle

Our CHARACTER is the foundation of the Win/Win principle.

We must develop *three essential character traits* to achieve the Win/Win paradigm:

- **Integrity:** Integrity is about how you live. For example, you've identified your roles and goals, if you live with integrity you live in accordance with those goals. Integrity is also about being honest, correct, ethical and trustworthy. When you live with integrity you keep your promises and commitments to others and to yourself.
- **Maturity:** This is the balance between *courage* and *consideration*. In other words, you are mature when you act tough but with respect for others. So, you're a mature leader if you don't courageously (and blind for others) go

ahead and leave half the people behind. If a person can express his feelings and convictions with courage balanced with consideration for the feelings and convictions of another person, he is mature. This person can empathically understand, but also courageously confront. High courage and consideration are essential for Win/Win solutions.

- **Abundance Mentality:** This is the idea that there is plenty out there for everybody. You think that there are always new chances and opportunities. Most people though are conditioned in the opposite *Scarcity Mentality*. That's the people who always think there's not enough for everybody. They think that there is a lack in life, that there are only few opportunities and chances. These people are often full of fear and desperation. You need to think with the abundance mentality – there is more than enough for everybody.

Cool stuff.

Develop the character traits *integrity*, *maturity* and *abundance mentality* and you'll think Win/Win more often.

In short: Always seek mutually beneficial relationships. Whether it's at work, at university or in private life, try to find solutions that benefit all parties mutually. That's what the most effective people do...

Think Win/Win.

On to the next Habit.

Habit 5:

Seek First to Understand, Then to Be Understood

This is all about communication.

Habit 5 is the KEY principle for effective communication. Basically, listen first... then speak.

The author claims that when we “listen” we have the tendency to rush in and try to give good advice. We don’t even let the speaker finish what she’s saying. We just rush in:

- “Ah I understand, I’ve been there, too.”
- “I know exactly what you mean.”
- “Yeah... You definitely should do this...”

Most people do not listen with the intent to understand; they listen with the intent to reply. They’re either speaking or preparing to speak.

WE DON’T LISTEN! We don’t listen, no, we’re preparing our say. **We are either speaking or preparing to speak...** How limited is that?

Sooo, seemingly we don’t listen but we prepare our say. And it gets even weirder, what we prepare to say is **mostly about us**. Can you believe that? What we’re preparing to say is about our very own autobiography, something we’ve experienced ourselves. And actually, we mean good, we try to help. But to put it bluntly, we completely fck up listening...

Let’s say your friend tries to tell you about a problem with her boyfriend. Before you let her finish, your brain automatically comes up with something related to your own life:

- “Oh damn. Yeah, **I** know. I’ve been there with **my** ex blablabla...”
- “Oh come on, your boyfriend’s an angel. **MY** boyfriend on the other hand...”
- “**I** told you so, he’s a douche! **I** knew it.”

Whatever you say, it’s most certainly related to your *autobiography*.

This is natural. We naturally try to find some response within our own life. However, this is completely limited. I mean... how are you going to understand another person if you constantly look for a response from your own life?

In short: We naturally respond with *our own* autobiography to a person who wants us to understand *her* autobiography...

UNBELIEVABLE...

Luckily, Covey has a remedy.

Empathic Listening

Covey states that in order to become a good communicator, you need to learn to listen thoroughly. Because a good communicator UNDERSTANDS the other person.

No understanding = no good communication.

The remedy: Empathic listening.

The essence of empathic listening is not that you agree with someone; it's that you fully, deeply, understand that person, emotionally as well as intellectually.

In order to understand another person we need to listen empathically.

This basically means to **listen with the intent to understand**.

Listening empathically involves four stages:

1. **Mimic Content:** You repeat the words that are being said (This forces you to actually listen).
2. **Rephrase the Content:** You put what's been said in your own words (Now you have to think about what's been said).
3. **Reflect Feeling:** You focus more on how the person feels than about what she says.
4. **Rephrase the Content and Reflect the Feeling:** Now you put the content *and* the feeling in your own words (This is not easy. If you feel that you've interpreted too much then you need to give her more time and space to express herself).

The basic idea is to listen with the intent to understand. That's all. Try to understand. Try not to think about what you've experienced or what you've done. Do not look within your own autobiography for an answer. Just try to listen and understand.

When you go in a conversation with the intent to completely understand the other person, you'll instinctively do the right thing. You'll listen thoroughly and rephrase the content to make sure you understand. You'll automatically look for the feeling, you'll even feel it.

That's all the magic: Deliberately seek to understand.

The quality of your communication is the quality of your life. – Tony Robbins

Habit 6: Synergize

Synergize...

This dazzling word is Covey's next Habit.

But what does it mean?

Well, the word SYNERGY comes from the Greek word for **working together** and it's based on Aristotle's theory that **the whole is greater than the sum of its parts**.

Synergy – the bonus that is achieved when things work together harmoniously.
– Mark Twain

In nature we have many synergies. For instance the relationship between zebras and oxpeckers: While the oxpeckers get food (ticks & parasites in the fur, but also blood) the zebras get the pest control and an alarm system (the birds make a hissing sound when they're frightened). So, both benefit from the relationship. That's synergetic.

Synergy is everywhere in nature. If you put two pieces of wood together, they will hold much more than the total of the weight held by each separately. The whole is greater than the sum of its parts. One plus one equals three or more.

The challenge is to apply the principles of creative cooperation, which we learn from nature, in our social interactions.

Stephen Covey's basic idea of synergy is that when we work together successfully, we can achieve MORE than we could individually.

So, how can we achieve synergy in everyday life?

Synergize Your Communication

That's what this is all about. Synergy in nature is nice to observe, but it doesn't help us in everyday life... We need to synergize our communication to bring about *creative cooperation*.

Creative cooperation is successful communication where both parties benefit. Together you can create something that individually no one could think of.

That's why $1+1=3$ or more!

Together you achieve more than each separately.

Synergy is the highest level of communication.

Imagine you're working together in a small group. In order to achieve creative cooperation you need to:

- **listen empathically**
- communicate clearly
- **open your mind** to new possibilities, new options
- imagine you want to gain new insights
- be thirsty for knowledge
- explore the topic to its fullest

Basically, be a sponge that sucks up everything, even if what's being said does NOT agree with you. You need to stay open-minded in order to achieve creative cooperation. Here's what Covey thinks when someone disagrees with him:

Stephen Covey's Attitude

"If a person of your intelligence and competence and commitment disagrees with me, then there must be something to your disagreement that I don't understand, and I need to understand it. You have a perspective, a frame of reference I need to look at".

Interesting, right?

This is a cool attitude that helps you gain knowledge and a more objective view because you get to know other people's perspectives. Whether you agree or disagree does not matter as it's all about gaining a broader view.

In short: You **value the differences**.

This is quite OPPOSITE to real life... In reality, people make up their opinion and stick with it. People are not open to other people's opinions. They believe what they think is right and don't give a fck about what others think. Most people don't value the differences... they couldn't care less...

Don't be one of them. Be like the most effective people and value different opinions. Again, you don't need to agree, just be open-minded and try to understand others. **Be humble** and recognize that your own perception is limited, you don't see and don't know everything.

The person who is truly effective has the humility and reverence to recognize his own perceptual limitations and to appreciate the rich resources available through interaction with the hearts and minds of other human beings.

The moment you realize that you can actually learn from others you're taking a huge step in the direction of *synergy*.

Imagine your working group again: As a group, listen to everybody's opinion and try to understand it. If you value the differences you will gain a broader and more objective view. And together, you can **gain new insights**. Together you can achieve more than individually, that's the key idea of synergy.

Take mind mapping. Imagine that when you brainstorm for yourself you end up with 5 elements. But when you brainstorm in the group you end up with 11 elements... So, working together you can create far better and more effective results than working individually.

That's it, Habit 6.

Simple, right?

Be humble and stay open-minded, value differences and suck up all the knowledge to create the highest level of communication – SYNERGY.

Together we can achieve more.

Part 4:

Continuous Improving

Baam!

Almost done!

Congratulations...

Now, this last part is about continuous self-growth.

Let's start with an interesting story...

Habit 7: Sharpen the Saw

Suppose you were to come upon someone in the woods working feverishly to saw down a tree.

"What are you doing?" you ask.

"Can't you see?" comes the impatient reply. *"I'm sawing down this tree."*

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

"Over five hours" he returns, *"and I'm beat! This is hard work."*

"Well why don't you take a break for a few minutes and sharpen that saw?" you inquire. *"I'm sure it would go a lot faster."*

"I don't have time to sharpen the saw," the man says emphatically. *"I'm too busy sawing!"*

Cool story, right?

Habit 7 is about taking time to **sharpen the saw**. It's about self-improvement. It's about continuous learning and growing. It's about preserving and enhancing the greatest asset you have – YOU!

This is the single most powerful investment we can ever make in our life – investment in ourselves.

Invest in yourself and sharpen that saw. Sharpen yourself, improve yourself consistently. Grow as a person.

EVERYDAY . . . !

You should work on yourself within all 4 dimensions of our nature – **physical, spiritual, mental** and **social/ emotional**.

You need to continuously renew and improve yourself in all four dimensions of life.

4 Dimensions of Self-Growth

The Physical Dimension: This involves caring effectively for our physical body – eating the right kinds of foods, getting sufficient rest and relaxation, and exercising on a regular basis. This is hyper important. You need a healthy body in order to be highly effective. Don't neglect healthy eating and exercising.

The Spiritual Dimension: This is your core dimension, your center, your commitment to your value system. It draws upon the sources that inspire and uplift you and tie you to the timeless truths of all humanity. This sounds spiritual... Basically, it's about finding inner peace and calmness. People do it in very different ways. You can meditate, pray, read, or just find inner peace somehow and build a sense of self. Take time for yourself. Just you.

The Mental Dimension: Covey claims that most of us let our minds atrophy as soon as we leave school. We watch TV and waste our time. He requests that we keep on learning ALL LIFE LONG. Education – continuing education, continually honing and expanding the mind – is vital mental renewal. Expose yourself to great minds and read good literature. The person who doesn't read is no better off than the person who can't read. So, keep on reading. Writing is another great way to sharpen your mental saw. This will affect all your relationships and it'll improve the quality and effectiveness of your days.

The Social/ Emotional Dimension: This dimension is primarily developed out of our relationships with others. It does not take time, but skills as we've learned in the Habits 4-6. Live by those Habits. Covey suggests serving other people anonymously – influence, not recognition, becomes the motive. In short: **Listen and serve**.

These are the four dimensions of human nature. The author advises us to keep on renewing in all four dimensions and **not even neglecting one!**

This will help you become more effective in all areas of life. You will grow as an individual. Grow as a person. Grow in character. You become a better person. You come closer to the best version of yourself.

Your level of success will seldom exceed your level of personal development, because success is something you attract by the person you become.

– Jim Rohn

Success is something you attract by the person you become. That alone underlines the importance of working on yourself.

And you know what's really cool?

You're doing it RIGHT NOW!

So, keep on learning and growing. Keep on improving yourself. **Sharpen yourself.**

Integrating the 7 Habits is the best start.

Have a look at the conclusion to quickly recap what we've learned...

Conclusion

Most important, *start applying* what you are learning. Remember, to learn and not to *do* is really not to learn. To know and not to *do* is really not to know.

Remember the story from the farmer that killed the goose that laid golden eggs?

Well, many people figuratively kill themselves in order to achieve outward success – you know, a high salary, a big house, a new car and a Rolex. They produce so much but take no care of themselves. Sooner or later the goose is dead and doesn't produce anything anymore.

To achieve true effectiveness, you need to find balance between producing and looking after yourself. YOU are your biggest asset.

And that's where you have to start: Start with yourself, change from the inside-out.

Start with yourself by being **PROACTIVE**.

- You are the creator of your life
- Take responsibility for your life
- Take initiative, get going
- Focus on the things you *can* control

As a proactive person you **BEGIN WITH THE END IN MIND**.

Know where you want to go. Know what you want to achieve. Know who you want to be.

Be a leader and lean your ladder against the right wall.

Now, climb that ladder by **PUTTING FIRST THINGS FIRST**.

You know what is important – so do it!

Don't only do what's urgent and easy, do what truly matters. Do it even if you don't feel like it.

- Build trustworthy relationships
- Plan long-term

- Work out
- Take time for yourself

Choose to do what's important rather than what's easy...

As soon as you're dealing with others, **THINK WIN/WIN.**

Seek mutually beneficial relationships. You win, the other wins. Both win.

In these relationships, **SEEK FIRST TO UNDERSTAND, THEN TO BE UNDERSTOOD.**

Listen to other people. And genuinely try to understand them. Listen empathically and don't prepare your say. Just seek to truly understand the other person.

When you've mastered listening, you're ready to **SYNERGIZE.**

Stay open-minded and hear other people's opinions. Value the differences and gain a more objective view. Together we can achieve more.

Last but not least, **SHARPEN THE SAW.**

Continuously improve yourself. Remember Jim Rohn saying that *Success is something you attract by the person you become...*

So, become the best ever possible version of yourself.

Again, start with yourself. Start today by trying to be proactive. Take initiative and get started. Step by step.

Thank You!