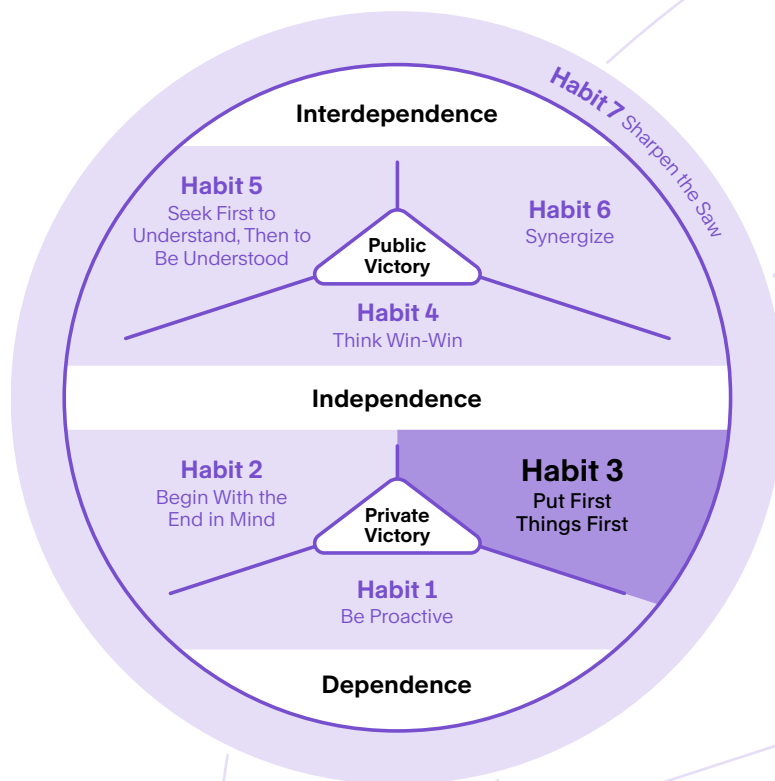


Habit 3: Put First Things First®

The Principle of Focus

What Does It Mean to Put First Things First?

Putting first things first is about spending our time in a way that aligns with our values and reflects our vision for our lives. To achieve the future we want, we need to protect time for pursuing it.



Common Paradigm

I don't have time—
I'm too busy.

+

Highly Effective Paradigm

I protect time for
what's important.

Practice 1: Focus on Priorities and Eliminate the Unimportant

THE TIME MATRIX®

The Time Matrix is a tool to help you manage your time and decide what's most important.

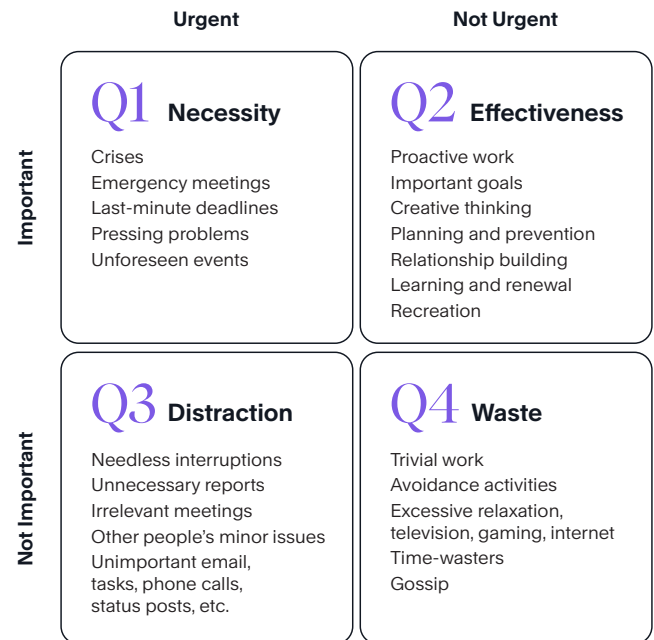
Urgent: How soon something must be done—or seems it must be done.

Important: Whether something contributes to your mission, roles, values, and goals.

The Quadrant Self-Check

Four questions to ask yourself to figure out how your time is serving you:

1. Which quadrant am I in?
2. Why am I here?
3. How long have I been here?
4. What return will I get on this time?



Strategies for Quadrant 3

How can you keep these Quadrant 3 activities from distracting you? Consider these three strategies:

- **Delegate:** Ask somebody more skilled, invested, or interested to help with the interruption. For instance, if you're a leader who regularly attends a meeting just to "stay in the loop," could you send a member of your team instead, someone for whom the meeting would be a valuable chance to learn?
- **Change:** Change how you deal with the interruption, especially if it's one that's not important to you but is important to others. For example, rather than stop what you're doing to reply to every message right away, set aside blocks of time during your day to respond to messages.
- **Stop:** Stop engaging with the interruption. Ask yourself: Do I need to engage with this at all? You might be surprised at how often the answer is no.

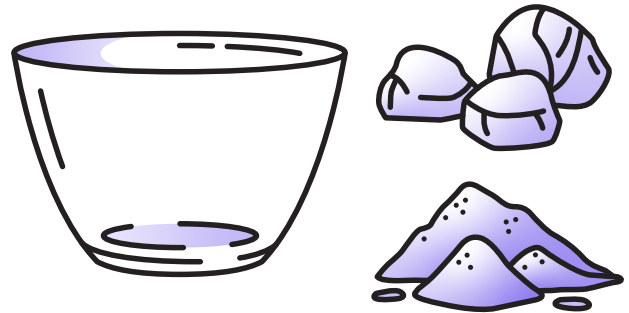
Practice 2: Plan Every Week

Weekly planning is the practice that will do more to balance our lives and increase our productivity than any other.

BIG ROCKS

A helpful way to think about the Big Rocks is that these are the 1-2 things you can do in each of your roles to go from ordinary to extraordinary. Big Rocks are the things that will take you closer to your personal mission and vision for your life.

We must make hard choices about what's important to us and do that first. If we don't, what's most important will get crowded out by other things. The key is to be intentional and to be proactive about how we choose to use our time.



MAKE WEEKLY PLANNING WORK FOR YOU

One of the best ways to make planning a habit is to treat the act of planning as a Big Rock—to protect time to plan at the start of every week. We recommend blocking off 30 minutes sometime at the start of your week and then 10 minutes each subsequent day to adjust.

Practice 3: Stay True in the Moment of Choice

How Can We Defend Ourselves From Distractions?

- Protect time ahead of time
- Write an implementation intention
- Write an “even over” statement
- Give yourself an incentive
- Eliminate distractions in your space
- Recruit an accountability partner

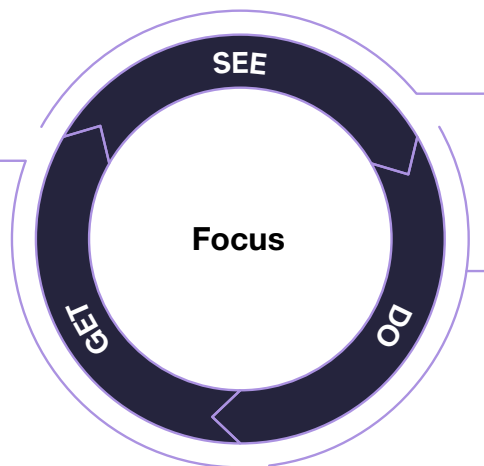
Avoiding Distractions in the Moment

- Pause before you respond
- Act in your *Circle of Influence*
- Remember your end in mind
- Know when to say no
- Use the Quadrant Self-Check
- Focus on one thing at a time

SHIFT YOUR PARADIGM. CHANGE YOUR PRACTICES. BE MORE EFFECTIVE.

Results

- Alignment between how you spend your time and what matters most.
- Increased organization and productivity.
- Greater self-discipline and accountability.



Paradigm

I protect time for what's most important.

Practices

- Focus on priorities and eliminate the unimportant.
- Plan every week.
- Stay true in the moment of choice.