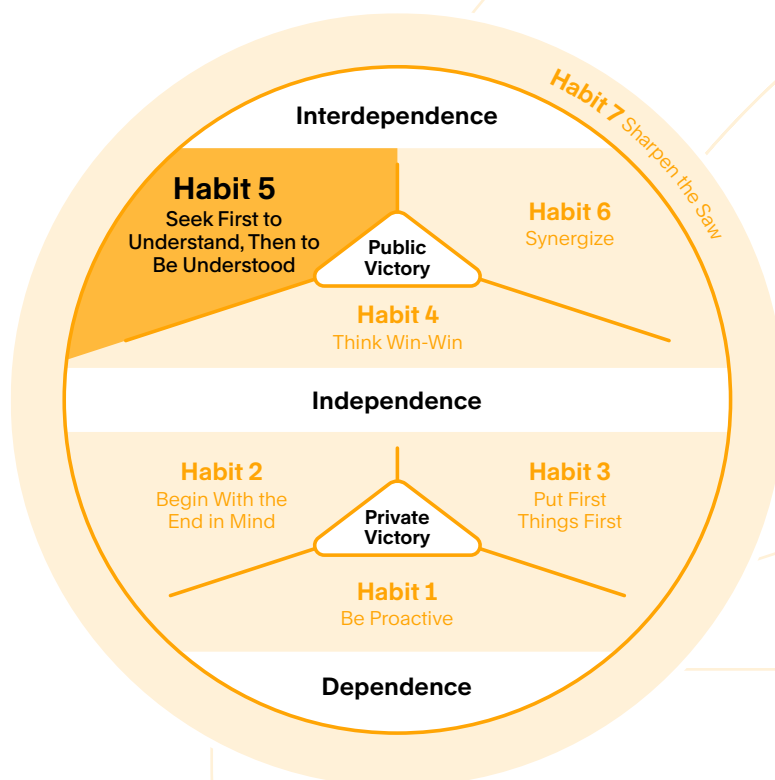


Habit 5: Seek First to Understand, Then to Be Understood®

The Principle of Respect

What Does It Mean to *Seek First to Understand, Then to Be Understood*?

Seeking first to understand, then be understood is about truly listening to others and honoring their perspectives. It's also about having the courage to respectfully say what we think and feel.



Common Paradigm

I need to get my point across.

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Highly Effective Paradigm

To communicate effectively with you, I need to understand you first.

Practice 1: Listen Empathically

There are two types of listening:

1. **Autobiographical listening:** Filtering what others say through our experiences, values, and perspectives.
2. **Empathic listening:** Creating space for others to share their perspective and emotions by listening deeply. We work to see the situation from the other person's perspective and try to understand how they feel.

LISTENING AUTOBIOGRAPHICALLY

Evaluate

Judging the value or correctness of what they're saying:

- "You're overreacting."
- "I'm not surprised."
- "I can't believe you did that."

Probe

Pressing them with our agenda:

- "If we do that, it'll . . ."
- "Look, that's just not what we need . . ."
- "Just tell me . . ."

Interpret

Assuming their experience is/was like ours:

- "That same thing happened to me, and I . . ."
- "You were probably just trying to . . ."
- "You must have been so mad!"

Advise

Giving unsolicited advice or solutions:

- "Here's what I would do . . ."
- "Have you thought about . . ."
- "In the past, we've . . ."

LISTENING EMPATHICALLY

Honor

Withholding judgment of their words and actions:

- "I'm not on a side. I'm just trying to understand."
- "I'm here to listen, not tell you what to do."
- "I'm just trying to understand where you're coming from."

Check

Reflecting both the content and feeling of their words to check your understanding:

- "You feel unsure about going that direction?"
- "You feel irritated that they did that?"
- "You feel like you regret sending that message?"

Process

Taking the time needed to deeply consider what they've shared:

- "I need a little more time to think."
- "Can I take a moment to think about it?"
- "Let's pause for now and I'll think on this more."

Wondering

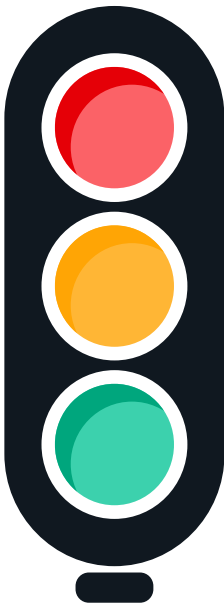
Asking clarifying questions that give them space to go deeper into their story:

- "Can you tell me more about that?"
- "What do you mean when you say . . .?"
- "What does that look like?"

Practice 2: Respectfully Seek to Be Understood

WATCH THE SIGNALS

Knowing when to share means paying attention to the signals the other person is sending, as you would with a traffic light.



Red Light

When you observe these things, it's time for empathic listening:

- Signs of disagreement or conflict.
- Body language signaling discomfort, anger, or other strong emotions.
- A clear lack of understanding.

Yellow Light

When you observe this, it's time to slow down and ask clarifying questions:

- Signs that there might be a lack of understanding.

Green Light

When you observe these, it's time to share:

- An invitation to share your thoughts.
- A clear openness to your perspective.
- That you're in a casual, free-flowing conversation.

THREE WAYS TO BE UNDERSTOOD

Credibility

Credibility relies on our character and integrity. It is based on the trust we've built over time. We might say something like, "As your trusted partner . . ."

Heart

Heart relies on recognizing and addressing the feelings of the people we're talking to. We might say something like, "I understand you're frustrated . . ."

Head

Head relies on logic and evidence. It means sharing the data, research, or examples that support our view. We might say something like, "The evidence suggests . . ."

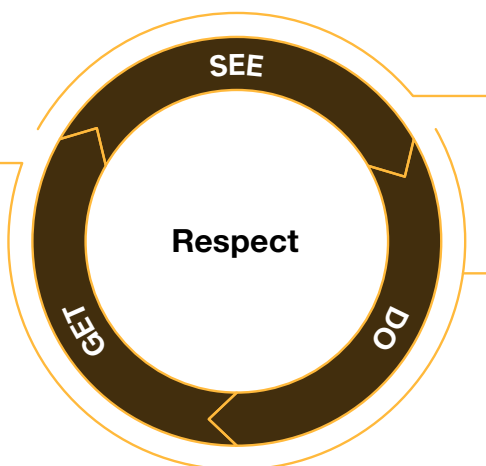
YOU, I, AND WE

Be wary of statements that begin with “you” since they can sound accusatory. Use an “I” statement to share your perspective or a “we” statement to include your audience.

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

Results

- Deeper understanding and connection with others.
- Increased trust.
- Effective communication.



Paradigm

To communicate effectively with you, I have to understand you first.

Practices

- Listen empathically.
- Respectfully seek to be understood.