

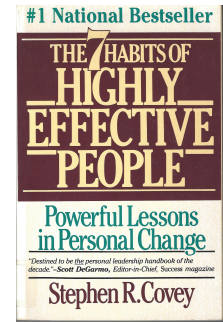
# The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People

Stephen Covey (1989)

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*Notes by Bob Evely  
Wilmore, Kentucky; 2019.*

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Before we review the 7 Habits that will lead to greater effectiveness in all aspects of our life, we will first consider some essential principles that must reside at the core of our being. Without these principles at work within us, any attempt to adopt the 7 Habits would be easily detected by others as manipulative and hypocritical ... contrary to our character.

The fact is that certain key principles must be a part of who we are ... driving our behavior from within. These principles are “natural laws” that are as real as the law of gravity. Things like:

- ✓ Fairness
- ✓ Honesty
- ✓ Integrity
- ✓ Patience
- ✓ Openness
- ✓ A respect for human dignity
- ✓ A desire to understand others
- ✓ A desire to make a contribution ... to serve
- ✓ A desire to maintain quality or excellence in all that we do
- ✓ A desire to grow

Others can read our character. And who we are (in terms of character) speaks far more loudly and powerfully than anything we say or do.

Principles are not simply actions or practices that we attempt to execute. They are underlying guidelines for human conduct that drive our behavior ... our words and actions ... from within.

We must sincerely desire to integrate these principles into our basic character; and we must make a deliberate commitment to shape our character with these principles.

Why are principles so important?

Consider this: Our perceptions are not objective ... they are biased by our character. With a flawed character we will have a flawed perception of things; and we may think we are right even when we are not. Our entire world view ... how we view all aspects of the world ... is determined by our character.

For example; does a terrorist think he is wrong? No! The terrorist believes he is right; and this firm belief is based on the world view he has adopted, which is based upon the principles that lie deep within him.

And so if our character is flawed, we need a “paradigm shift.”

Many years ago Ptolemy believed the earth was at the center of the universe, and his observations of the heavens and his scientific conclusions were based upon that world view. When Copernicus demonstrated that the sun was at the center of our solar system, this changed everything relative to conclusions about the heavens. This was a paradigm shift ... an entirely new world view ... an “A-HA” moment!

If our character is flawed and lacks the basic principles, we need a paradigm shift ... an “A-HA” moment!

Sometimes certain events may prompt a paradigm shift. Those facing a life threatening crisis will begin to view their priorities differently. But even lacking an event of that magnitude, it is possible for us to evaluate our character and to be deliberate about reshaping it by incorporating the principles that are lacking or flawed.

This is where it must begin if we are to implement the 7 Habits, to become more effective in our lives.

Let us consider a few other things before we jump into a review of the first Habit.

### **INTERDEPENDENCE**

As infants we all begin life totally **dependent** for everything we need. As we grow we seek to become more and more **independent**. We may think we have arrived when we become independent, but true maturity comes when we realize our need to go a step further and become **interdependent**. All of nature is interdependent, not independent. We need one another. True effectiveness will come only when we realize this key truth.

### **LEARNING TO LISTEN**

We must learn to listen in a new way. This begins, once again, with underlying principles. We must be **patient** ... we must be **open** ... and we must have a **sincere desire to understand** the other person. We must listen for the purpose of **understanding** ... not for the purpose of getting our chance to talk and impart knowledge.

### **WHAT IS A HABIT?**

A habit is the intersection of three things:

- ✓ Knowledge
- ✓ Skill
- ✓ Desire

Knowledge is the “what to do.”

Skill is the “how to do it.”

Desire is the “want to do it.”

All three of these are needed to create or change a habit.

As we consider the 7 Habits of Highly Effective People we will discuss the “what to do” and the “how to do it.” But the third crucial ingredient is up to you ... do you “want to do it?” Do you have the desire to make a change in your life to become more effective?

Horace Mann once said, “Habits are like a cable. We weave a strand of it everyday and soon it cannot be broken.” This is not entirely true. Any habit, regardless of how ingrained it is, can be broken or changed. Habits can be learned and unlearned. But change is not easy, because habits have a tremendous “gravity pull” that will require a tremendous commitment on our part to make a change. The easy path will be to remain as we are.

So we must ask ourselves the question ... do I have the desire to change for the better? Am I willing to exert the effort necessary to erase bad habits and replace them with new, positive habits for the sake of being more effective as a manager, employee, spouse, parent, family member or friend?

## **HABIT 1: BE PROACTIVE**

Are you in control of your life?

There are many influences acting upon us. I have a certain genetic makeup. I was raised in a certain environment. There are external, environmental factors that affect me. But the question is this ... is my life **determined** by these factors, or do I have **control** over outcomes in my life?

I could say, "My grandparents are responsible because they passed their genes along to me." I could say, "My parents are responsible because they raised me in the way that they did." I could say, "My environment is doing this to me, with these tough economic times and these turbulent social conditions." But the fact is that despite all of these things, I have the freedom to choose my response to whatever the stimulus that is acting upon me.

Viktor Frankl was a psychiatrist imprisoned in a Nazi death camp. His wife, brother and parents all died in the camps. He was tortured. His captors could do whatever they wanted to his body, and had total control over his environment. But Frankl vowed that he, himself would decide how all of this would affect him. He practiced **visualization**, and many times he **saw** himself lecturing to his students after his release. He could **see** himself living in freedom. This is what got him through those very difficult years.

Between stimulus and response, we have the freedom to choose. We have "response-ability" ... the ability to choose our response.

Reactive people are strongly affected by physical environment. When the weather is good, they feel good. When the weather is bad, they feel bad. When people treat them well, they feel good. When people treat them poorly, they feel bad.

But proactive people carry their own weather with them. Rain or shine; it makes no difference. They are driven by values ... carefully thought through, selected and internalized.

We are responsible for our own lives. Our behavior is a function of our decisions, not our conditions. Regardless of the cards we are dealt, we alone have the responsibility for making things happen.

Proactive people do not blame circumstances, conditions or conditioning for their behavior. Behavior is a product of our own conscious choice. I always have the ability to **choose** my response.

In actuality, difficulties that I face can be beneficial. Difficulties can forge my character, and develop internal powers and abilities. Difficulties can give me the ability to handle difficult circumstances throughout my life. And difficulties can enable me to inspire others. It is not that I invite difficulties to occur ... but when they do, I can choose to respond in a positive way.

Reactive people will typically sit back and wait for better things to happen to them, or for someone to solve their problems and take care of them. But proactive people offer solutions to problems.

The place to start? Watch your language!

You may find yourself using reactive language.

- ✓ There's nothing I can do
- ✓ That's just the way I am
- ✓ He makes me so mad
- ✓ I have to do that
- ✓ I can't
- ✓ I must

- ✓ If only

Let us begin to replace this with proactive language.

- ✓ Let me look at my alternatives
- ✓ I can choose a different approach
- ✓ I control my own feelings
- ✓ I will choose an appropriate response
- ✓ I choose
- ✓ I prefer
- ✓ I will

If, for example, there is a trip that is planned and your attendance is expected, will you say:

- ✓ I have to go ... or
- ✓ I have weighed all of the options and circumstances, and I **choose** to go

Every time I have a worry or concern, I can ask myself: Is this within my **circle of influence**?

Most people focus on the **circle of concern** ... all of the things we may be concerned about. But proactive people focus only on the **circle of influence** ... those things I can control or influence.

There are some things over which I have direct control. These are clearly within my circle of influence.

There are other things over which I have indirect control. This requires my interdependence with others, and we will consider these things in Habits 4-6.

And there are some things over which I have no control. I can learn to smile, accept, and live with these issues; although I must be careful not to place things in this category too quickly.

And as I focus on my circle of influence, it will grow. Here is an example.

There was a company president that treated everyone as a gofer. Most everyone reactively served as a gofer, complaining all the while. They were controlled by the president and could do nothing about it.

But one employee was proactive. He served as a gofer, but took the initiative to go the extra mile. This employee anticipated the president's needs, and sought to understand the president's underlying concerns in all that he did. This employee did more than was expected; not only providing information that was requested by the boss, but also analyses and recommendations.

What happened? The president began to ask this person for their opinion. And therefore the employee's circle of influence was enlarged.

**Choose** to be proactive. The proactive person says, "I can be different, and by being different I can effect positive change in what's out there."

We are responsible for our own effectiveness and happiness. Remember, a habit is the intersection of knowledge, skill and desire ... and all three of these are fully within our control.

## **HABIT 2: BEGIN WITH THE END IN MIND**

Close your eyes and imagine your own funeral. There are four speakers ... a close family member, a friend, a work associate, and someone from your church or service organization. What would each one of these people say about:

- ✓ Your character

- ✓ Your contributions and achievements
- ✓ How they will remember you
- ✓ What difference you made in the lives of others

To have the end in mind means to see the big picture in your life.

As you visualize your funeral and as you think about what you would want these four people to say about you, this will help you to have the big picture in mind ... so that whatever you do on any given day will not violate the criteria you will want to define you. And each day of your life will contribute in some meaningful way to the vision you have for your life as a whole. But you will need to set aside time to develop this big-picture vision.

Our biggest enemy will be **the activity trap** ... the “busy-ness” of life.

It is possible to be very efficient ... being very busy and doing everything very well. But are you doing the right things? That is the difference between being efficient and being effective.

- ✓ Efficiency is doing things right.
- ✓ Effectiveness is doing the right things.

We can only be effective if we keep the end in mind. What are the right things for me to spend my time with, to contribute toward my big picture vision?

Everything that is created actually has two creations. The first creation is mental ... the vision. And the second creation is physical. To build a house the first creation would be the vision ... the plan ... the blueprint. And then comes the actual building or physical creation of the house.

Now listen very closely to this next statement ... **We are responsible for both creations!**

If we do not accept responsibility for the first creation (mental), we will allow other people and circumstances to shape much of our lives by default.

To manage involves the second creation. We ask ourselves, “How best can I accomplish certain things?” But a good manager is also a good leader. “What are the things I want to accomplish?”

But again consider the activity trap! The pressing, urgent matters that are right in front of us may give us a great sense of accomplishment ... but we may not be working on the most important things.

The first creation requires the use of our imagination. This takes deliberate effort, and time must be set aside for this purpose.

Each of us has a “**center**” ... that which drives our decisions. We might be:

- ✓ Spouse-centered: What decision would make my spouse happy?
- ✓ Family-centered: What is best for my family?
- ✓ Money-centered: What will bring the biggest financial reward?
- ✓ Work-centered
- ✓ Possession-centered
- ✓ Pleasure-centered
- ✓ Friend or Enemy-centered
- ✓ Church-centered
- ✓ Self-centered

Often our center is a complicated combination of a number of these factors.

But our goal should be to become **principle-centered**. Principles are well-thought-out, and provide a solid foundation that does not change. Principles don't get mad, or treat us differently

from one day to the next. Our goal should be to always choose our actions based on correct principles.

Here is an example. I have promised my wife that I will take her to a concert this evening. But in mid-afternoon my boss approaches and tells me that my help is needed to complete a project that will require me to work into the evening. What will I do if I am:

- ✓ Spouse-centered or family-centered?
- ✓ Work-centered?
- ✓ Possession-centered?
- ✓ Pleasure-centered?
- ✓ Friend-centered? (Will my friends be at work, or at the concert?)
- ✓ Enemy-centered? (Will an enemy at work gain the edge if he works and I do not?)

You see how my response to the boss would vary depending on my center.

But if I am principle-centered I can stand back from the emotion of the situation and evaluate all options, taking all factors into consideration. I can then proactively choose the best option based on principles ... a decision that will contribute to my ultimate values in life ... to the big picture.

This is a long-term thing. If I have continually made commitments to my wife and broken them, how will she understand if I now tell her I must work this evening? If I lack commitment at work, how will my boss understand if I refuse his request to work this evening? Here is an example of why character is so important.

If I have maintained an open and honest relationship with both my wife and my boss, and if both therefore respect me and know I am a man of character ... I can make the best decision after weighing all facts, and communicate that decision to both my wife and my spouse ... and both will understand.

Think about creating a **personal mission statement**. This will be your philosophy or creed. What do you want to be (character), and what do you want to do (contributions and achievements)? You may, for example, begin as follows:

- ✓ I will be a success at home first
- ✓ I will never compromise with honesty
- ✓ I will always remember the people involved, not just the issues
- ✓ I will wait to hear both sides before judging
- ✓ I will defend those who are absent when they are being talked about
- ✓ I will plan tomorrow's work today
- ✓ I will maintain a positive attitude
- ✓ I will listen twice as much as I speak

A mission statement cannot be written overnight, but will require deep thought, careful analysis and many re-writes. Both sides of your brain are needed ... the logical, verbal left brain of specifics; and the creative, visual right brain of big pictures. Our mission statement will give expression to our uniqueness. Viktor Frankl says it like this: "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."

And so we must examine our gifts, talents, strengths ... and we then seek to **detect** rather than invent our mission.

Now let us say that I have identified love for my children as a fundamental part of my mission statement ... but suppose I have had a tendency to over-react at times. I will take my mission

statement and create affirmations, to prepare me for when situations arise. I will visualize a situation that has played-out in the past, and I may create the following affirmation:

- ✓ “It is deeply satisfying that I respond with wisdom, love, firmness and self-control when my children misbehave.”

And I visualize myself behaving in this fashion ... because this is consistent with my mission statement and my big-picture values ... even though this may not have been the norm for me in the past. (Remember ... I am proactive, and I can choose to make changes in my habits.)

Your mission statement should be organized, and it should cover all aspects of your life. Start with your various roles:

- ✓ Husband or wife
- ✓ Father or mother
- ✓ Neighbor or friend
- ✓ Work associate
- ✓ Community-member

Each of these roles would be included in your big-picture vision, and your mission statement.

And once the mission statement is created, it must become a working document every day. Each time you are faced with a decision, you may ask yourself, “In light of these principles, what will my decision be?”

Besides a personal mission statement, you might consider a family mission statement, and perhaps an organizational mission statement for your department at work.

But remember, the mission statement will just be a tool to help you stay on track. The main thing is to keep the end in mind! How will you be remembered?

### **HABIT 3: PUT FIRST THINGS FIRST**

Things that matter most must never be at the mercy of things that matter least.

Habit 2 was the first creation ... the big picture. Now Habit 3 involves the second creation ... what actions will I take on a daily basis that contribute toward that big picture?

You may start by asking ... What one thing can I do on a regular basis, that I am not doing now, that would make a tremendous positive difference in my life?

Both Habits 1 and 2 are prerequisites before I am ready to look at Habit 3. I must be **proactive**, knowing that I must take responsibility in my life. And I must have a **big-picture vision** of the things that are important. Once I have integrated Habits 1 and 2, I can proceed with Habit 3 and practice effective self management.

But discipline will be needed! Putting first things first every day will not be easy. I will need to subordinate my feelings, impulses and moods at times.

E. M. Gray once said, “The successful person has the habit of doing the things that failures don’t like to do. They don’t like doing them either, but their disliking is subordinated to the strength of their purpose.”

Before proceeding, remember Habit 2. Do you have a very clear big-picture vision? Do you have the end in mind, and do you have the desire to implement that vision?

Putting first things first on a daily basis is more than creating and using a to-do list. It is more than using an appointment book or calendar. It is even more than prioritizing your tasks. Putting

first things first is effective **self-management** (not time management). It is not just a focus on things or time ... it is a focus on **results**. And this will require a focus not just on tasks, but on people ... to accomplish those results.

Everything we do can be categorized into one of four "quadrants." Imagine a box with four squares.

In the upper left is Quadrant 1 ... those things that are important and urgent. These are crises and pressing problems. Things like a fire in your kitchen.

In the lower left is Quadrant 3 ... things that are urgent but not important. But since they are urgent, and often have deadlines attached (sometimes self-imposed deadlines) we do these things because we think they must be done. But we must learn to discern between things important and not important, even when they appear to be urgent.

In the lower right is Quadrant 4 ... things not urgent and not important. The trap is that these things are often fun to do. It is rewarding to do things and check them off the list, feeling a sense of accomplishment. But Quadrant 4 is the first that must go, to make room for the most important quadrant.

And that is in the upper right corner of our box; Quadrant 2 ... things that are important but not urgent. Sadly, this is the most neglected Quadrant.

Because we have so little time left, Quadrant 2 is sacrificed because these things are not urgent (they have no deadlines) and because they tend to take a larger investment of time. Things like planning, preparation, relationship-building, preparing a mission statement, exercise, preventive maintenance.

Now consider this! If we had done preventive maintenance, our kitchen may not have caught fire because the wiring would have been updated. So by investing in Quadrant 2 (Important but not Urgent) we would reduce the fire-fighting of Quadrant 1 (Important and Urgent).

And so the key is to find time for Quadrant 2 ... those things we know are important, but that we never have time for.

But again, we will need a clear idea of what is important (the big picture) in order for us to know what needs to be in Quadrant 2. Once we have that big-picture vision, our plan should be:

- ✓ Stay away from non-important items
- ✓ Shrink the fire-fighting of Quadrant 1 as much as possible
- ✓ This will then result in more time for Quadrant 2

We will not be able to walk away from all of our tasks cold turkey. Quadrant 1 is filled with real emergencies that cannot be ignored. But this Quadrant will shrink as we properly deal with the non-important items and find time for Quadrant 2.

Some valuable strategies will be:

- ✓ Know your big picture ... what is important
- ✓ Prioritize everything on your schedule
- ✓ Before adding anything to your schedule, be sure it is important
- ✓ Learn to say "no" in a nice way
- ✓ When a manager tends to pile-on the tasks, be open and honest about all of your priorities, and ask which task will need to take a lower position if you are to take on the new project
- ✓ Learn to delegate some tasks



And we must always remember the people-factor. At times we will need to subordinate our schedules to people, reflecting our values. When we are principle-centered, we think in terms of effectiveness ... and that means taking time to deal with people.

In terms of putting first things first on a daily basis, consider a weekly plan. Begin by listing each of your roles ... husband/wife, salesperson, Sunday school teacher, etc. Then identify 2-3 goals for the next week for each role ... incorporating Quadrant 2 items as much as possible. Don't overschedule ... but allow enough time for unanticipated events. Planning is important, but where people are involved (as they always are) we must also learn to be flexible.

You will be tested.

- ✓ Beware of the urgent and not important.
- ✓ Do not be tempted by the pleasures of the not urgent and not important.
- ✓ Remember the people-factor ... think in terms of people, not tasks to complete
- ✓ Remember ... effectiveness, not efficiency

#### **HABIT 4: THINK WIN-WIN**

The first three Habits could be categorized as "private," in that they concern us as individuals. As individuals we can be Proactive, we can Begin With the End in Mind, and we can Put First Things First on a daily basis.

Habit 4 begins a new category which requires us to work with others to maximize our effectiveness.

We could describe every relationship we have with others as an "Emotional Bank Account." Our account balance for any relationships depends on the deposits and withdrawals that we make.

We make withdrawals by:

- ✓ Being discourteous
- ✓ Showing disrespect
- ✓ Cutting others off when they speak
- ✓ Overreacting
- ✓ Ignoring others
- ✓ Becoming arbitrary in our actions and decisions
- ✓ Betraying trust
- ✓ Breaking a promise or commitment

We make deposits by:

- ✓ Being courteous
- ✓ Being kind
- ✓ Being honest
- ✓ Keeping promises and commitments
- ✓ Listening to the other person
- ✓ Apologizing sincerely when we make a withdrawal

And we must continue to make deposits, because the absence of deposits means neglect, which is a withdrawal.

We could look at any given relationship that we have and consider the deposits and withdrawals we have made over time, and we could then understand why the balance in that account is as it is. And we can also work on a relationship that may have a low balance; consciously making deposits so as to improve the balance in that account.

We can look at problems as opportunities to build our emotional bank accounts ... to invest in the relationship. It is not the problem so much as how we respond to the problem that can become a major deposit in the account.

Now as we work with others, we should always work toward "Win-Win." That is to say, situations and agreements should be worked on in such a way that we win, and the other person also wins.

We must be sure the "system" is setup in such a way so as to encourage Win-Win. For example, if we tell a group that we want them to work together as a team so that everyone wins, but if we then pit them against each other in contests that enable one to win as the others lose, we are not really encouraging Win-Win.

Many people have a Win-Lose attitude. Or they may simply be Win ... not caring if the other person wins or not, but only that they themselves win. But in terms of relationships, if we win and the other person loses ... even if they concede voluntarily ... we have not really won at all. The other person will harbor resentment, and will look to get even at the next opportunity.

The highest goal, whenever possible, is to strive for Win-Win or No Deal. That is to say, if we cannot both win, we mutually agree to call off the deal altogether. No Deal may not be possible in some relationship situations, but in all cases we should strive for Win-Win.

To get to Win-Win we must:

- ✓ Spend time in the communication process
- ✓ Listen ... listen ... listen
- ✓ Express our point of view with courage
- ✓ Continue in the Win-Win spirit until a solution is reached that both feel good about, no matter how long it takes

Win-Win begins with our character. We must have integrity, patience and maturity at the root of our being.

Win-Win should be our goal in all relationships ... continually building trust by making deposits in our emotional bank accounts as we seek the welfare of others. And most certainly every agreement we work on, and every system we setup, should always place Win-Win as first and foremost.

Identify those in your life that model the Win-Win attitude, and watch them closely. Over time we, too, can learn to be Win-Win people in all that we do.

### **HABIT 5: SEEK FIRST TO UNDERSTAND**

Before we can expect others to listen to us, we must first seek to understand them. A doctor does not prescribe before a diagnosis is made, yet we often give advice to others before we really understand their perspective.

Once again we must recognize the importance of character. If my private performance does not square with my public performance ... or if there is inconsistency between my words and my behavior ... I have not earned the right to be heard; and others will typically not listen to me when I offer my perspectives.

Now assuming that my character is in order, the most important principle for interpersonal relations is this ... *Seek first to understand; and then to be understood.*

If I want to understand you, the steps are as follows:

1. First you must trust me (consider the balance in the Emotional Bank Account)

2. Then you will be willing to open up to me
3. And then I must listen

The most important skill in life is communication. We spend most of our waking hours communicating, and we've spent years learning how to read and write and speak. But we have had little training in the art of listening.

The fact is that we need a paradigm shift in how we listen ... an entirely new way to listen.

Most of us listen with the intent to reply. We have valuable information to share with others in the conversation, and we listen just long enough to know what we are going to say ... and then we wait for a gap in the conversation to be able to share our insights.

And most of us listen exclusively through our own contexts ... saying things like, "I know exactly how you feel. I went through the same thing. Let me tell you about my experience."

Sometimes we ignore the other person. Sometimes we pretend to listen. Sometimes we practice "selective listening." Sometimes we even listen to every single word the other person is saying, but we are still missing out on the most important part of listening.

***We must seek to listen with the intent to understand the other person!***

This is to say we must get inside the other person's frame of reference. We must seek to perceive the world as the other person sees it, not as we see it. We must set aside our own assumptions, motives and interpretations. We must listen to more than just the words the other person is saying. We must listen for feeling and meaning. We must set aside evaluating and advising as we listen empathically ... striving to understand how the other person feels. When the other person asks for advice, he is inviting us to provide logical, fact-based counsel. But when the other person is sharing how they feel, we must learn to listen empathically ... trying to understand how they feel.

This is not just a new listening "technique." We must truly desire to understand the other person, in which case we are earnestly trying to listen with the intent to understand.

And if we have not done a good job of listening in our past relationships, we can begin anew. If we are serious about this, we might say: *"I know I haven't listened to you like I should, but I want to. It's hard for me. I may blow it a few times. But I'm going to work at this because I really care about you, and I want to understand."*

And as for the other side of communication, when it **is** our chance to be heard let us take the time to prepare ourselves ... and to present our ideas clearly, simply, specifically, visually and in context with what the other person has shared with us.

Seek first to understand ... and then to be understood.

**HABIT 6: SYNERGIZE**

When two or more people gather, the whole is greater than the sum of its parts. This is synergy. Synergy opens up new possibilities, new ideas, new insights ... things we would not think of if left to ourselves.

But for synergy to work we must:

- ✓ Value and respect differences in others
- ✓ Utilize the strengths of each individual

The environment must be right for synergy to take place. Openness must be encouraged and not stifled. Participants must feel safe, knowing they will not be criticized or belittled, and that the things they say will not be shared outside the group. There must be trust.

Most importantly there must be respect for all individuals. The attitude should be that everyone has something of value to offer. I should be able to say of each individual in the group, *“If a person of your intelligence and competence disagrees with me, then there must be something to your position that I do not understand; and I want to understand it.”*

Even if a group gathers and there is no sharing or synergy happening, each individual has the ability to practice being proactive. If I begin the process of sharing in a genuine and sincere way; if I exhibit openness and trust, others will feel safe in doing so as well. Sharing by one will lead to sharing by another, and there will be creativity ... and a growing excitement. This is synergy.

With synergy, new possibilities are opened up. If one person has one opinion and another person has a different opinion, it may be possible to find a third position that would be Win-Win for both. Both can sit on the same side of the table, seeking to fully understand the other's perspectives, and agreeing to seek a Win-Win position.

But we cannot think that we are the expert and that our way is the right way. We must value the differences in others, and recognize that through synergy and through the ideas offered by others:

- ✓ I will add to my own knowledge and understanding
- ✓ I will be better able to communicate with those who see things differently than me
- ✓ I will be able to see different possibilities that I have overlooked

### **HABIT 7: SHARPEN THE SAW**

We are often so busy sawing down the tree that we fail to take time to sharpen the saw blade. But if we were to sharpen the blade, the sawing of the tree would be so much easier. We would be so much more effective!

This is the habit that makes all of the other habits possible ... *Sharpen the saw!* Simply put, we must set aside time for **renewal** in all aspects of our life.

- ✓ Physical: Exercise. Nutrition. Stress management.
- ✓ Mental: Reading. Visualizing. Planning. Writing.
- ✓ Spiritual: Study. Meditation. Value clarification.
- ✓ Social-Emotional: Service. Empathy.

We can look at ourselves as “instruments” used to accomplish big-picture things in life. We must maintain these instruments. Clearly this is a Quadrant 2 activity ... Important but not Urgent. Like other Quadrant 2 activities we often find ourselves too busy to do this. But we must find time.

If we don't find time, for example, to exercise and plan our diets (Quadrant 2 activities) we may one day find ourselves with a Quadrant 1 emergency ... like a health crisis. This is why finding time for Quadrant 2 is so important ... and sharpening the saw is in this category.

Remember that all four dimensions of our being are important. All are a part of our “instrument” that needs to be maintained if we are to be effective. We must set aside time regularly to sharpen our physical, mental, spiritual and social-emotional saw blades.

**IN CLOSING ...**

Real change comes from the inside out; not from trying to change our outward behavior with a quick fix. We must go to the root ... to our character ... and consider the paradigms through which we see and interact with the world.

It is not easy to build a character of integrity, or to live a life of love and service ... but it is possible. And it begins with the desire to center our lives on correct principles, and to break out of our old paradigms.

Correct principles are natural laws ... and God the Creator is the source of these laws, and the source of our conscience. To the degree to which we align ourselves with correct principles, we will be able to fulfill the measure of our created being.

1. Be proactive
2. Begin with the end in mind
3. Put first things first
4. Think Win-Win
5. Seek first to understand
6. Synergize
7. Sharpen the saw

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