

# THE 7 HABITS OF HIGHLY EFFECTIVE PEOPLE

## BOOK DIGEST

### PARADIGMS AND PRINCIPLES

#### INSIDE OUT

*“There is no real excellence in all this world  
which can be separated from right living—David Starr Jordan”*

Stephen Covey had spent more than 25 years working with people in business, university, and marriage and family settings, before writing this book.

He was inspired to follow the path he describes through those 7 habits, when he and his wife realized that what most of us have been taught about personal development and efficiency was not helping--and could not help--his teenage son who was deeply struggling. Following those principles and the inside-out paradigm shift, both parents could change their thoughts and behaviors in a way that empowered their son to blossom and thrive.

His personal journey started with realizing how perceptions dictate the way we see and how the way we see drives our behaviors. In his own words:

*“It taught me that we must look at the lens through which we see the world, as well as at the world we see, and that the lens itself shapes how we interpret the world”*

*“(…) If we wanted to change the situation, we first had to change ourselves.  
And to change ourselves effectively, we first had to change our perceptions”*

#### The Personality and Character Ethics overview

That’s how he came to understand that what he calls the “success literature” of the past fifty years (that would be 1939-1989) was superficial, focusing on quick fixes for acute problems, instead of solving the underlying chronic ones. He refers to those techniques focused solely on social image consciousness as the **Personality Ethic** (PE). In contrast what was written in the first 150 years since the Declaration of Independence had focused on **Character Ethics** (CE) and subjects such as integrity, humility, fidelity, temperance, courage, justice, patience, industry, simplicity, modesty and the Golden Rule. It is based on the knowing that **one can only experience true success and enduring happiness after integrating these principles in their basic character.**

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The PE however roots success in the personality, as defined by our public image, attitudes, behaviors, skills and techniques lubricating the processes of human interaction. It is based on human and PR techniques on one side and a positive mental attitude on the other. The author reminds that there is truth in some inspiring maxims such as “whatever the mind of man can conceive and believe it can achieve” but there’s more to the story; and a lot of the other concepts of the PE are manipulative and even deceptive, fostering fake interests in others to get them where we want them and driving a will to intimidate our way through life.

*“Some of this literature acknowledged character as an ingredient of success, but tended to compartmentalize it rather than recognize it as foundational and catalytic. Reference to the CE became mostly lip service; the basic thrust was quick-fix influence techniques, power strategies, communication skills, and positive attitudes.”*

Here is how it impacted his parenting style. He shifted from what felt a conditional way to love based on the expectations our culture teaches us to have for and towards our children, to seeing his task as to affirm, enjoy and value his son. To enjoy him instead of judging or comparing him. In his own words:

*“Because we saw him as fundamentally adequate and able to cope with life, we stopped protecting him against the ridicule of others”.*

### Primary and Secondary Greatness

S.C. underlines that yes, some of the PE are essential for success such as personal growth, communication skill training and education on influence strategies and positive thinking, but they are secondary traits.

*“If I try to use human influence strategies and tactics of how to get other people to do what I want, to work better, to be more motivated, to like me and each other—while my character is fundamentally flawed, marked by duplicity and insincerity—then, in the long run, I cannot be successful.”*

He reminds us that:

*“It simply makes no difference how good the rhetoric is or even how good the intentions are; if there is little or no trust, there is no foundation for permanent success. Only basic goodness gives life to technique.”*

Agriculture provides the perfect metaphor for us to remember that there is a process to follow for the harvest to be successful. We reap only what we sow; and there is no shortcut available.



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### The Power of a Paradigm

The 7 habits are the primary traits we need for lasting happiness and success. They need to be internalized and for this we need to first become aware of our current paradigms and then make the necessary paradigm shifts accordingly. S.C. explains that the word paradigm comes from the Greek and means a model, theory, perception, assumption or frame of reference. It's the way we think we see the world, which means that it is the way our sight of the world is influenced by our perceptions, understandings and interpretations. He takes the analogy of maps. They're the maps we use to find our way. And this is why it is paramount for us to use the right ones. This is also why focusing on our behaviors and attitudes will get us nowhere if we do not check first if our map is correct. Trying harder and being positive will not be enough to get us to the right downtown Manhattan restaurant if we keep on following the directions of Chicago's subway map instead of New York's.

"Each of us has many, many maps in our head, which can be divided into two main categories: maps of the way things are, or realities, and maps of the way things should be, or values.

We interpret everything we experience through those mental maps.

We seldom question their accuracy; we're usually even unaware that we have them.

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

And this insight is a very important ones because those maps drive our behaviors.

Please refer to the book to do a powerful exercise on the power of perceptions. He used two different sketches that are meant to be looked at for 10 seconds, to prompt our interpretation of a more abstract one. Depending on which drawing our eyes see first, we're going to read the abstract sketch in a very different way. This is a potent demonstration of how having had different experiences and owning different facts can drastically influence any perspective we might have right now. How 10 seconds can change our entire read of a situation! It explains how we can sometimes ask how "they can think what they think" and wonder "can't they see what I see?" "They" do not. We do not see the world as it is, we see it as we are. A point that the author makes again and again throughout the whole chapter. We have been molded by what we were taught consciously or not in our families, schools, work environments, places of worship, friendships and social circles since the day we were born. In the drawings we could either see an attractive young woman or an elderly woman. It is very obvious that what we see will completely shift in turn our behavior towards that person! That's what our paradigms do to us. They dictate our interpretations of the facts. Same sketch. Same black lines to look at. A completely different story in our minds. This is why we must change our paradigms first! Instead of focusing on only tailoring our behaviors.

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*“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.”*

*“The more aware we are of our basic paradigms, maps or assumptions, and the extent to which we have been influenced by our experience, the more we can take responsibility for those paradigms, examine them, test them against reality, listen to others, and be open to their perceptions, thereby getting a larger picture and a far more objective view.”*

### **The Power of a Paradigm Shift**

Paradigm shifts move us from one way of seeing the world to another. This is when new data, missing links or additional background lead us to reconsider our perspective on anything, to reassess our priorities, to uncover a blind spot and make a different choice going forward. And the beauty of it is that change then occurs naturally. Just by shifting our paradigm, our behavior is going to be edited. It can't not be, we know better now. Change not only becomes effortless, it happens organically without us having to think about it.

### **Seeing and Being**

*“Being is seeing in the human dimension”*

This is why paradigms cannot be separated from character, they are the roots of it. They are the lens through which we see the world.

### **The Principle-Centered Paradigm**

S.C. refers to principles for the natural laws that cannot be broken. The objective reality that governs human growth and happiness. Those principles are **self-evident**, easily validated by anyone who considers them and found imbued in all enduring religious frameworks, philosophical currents and ethical systems. He takes the example of fairness. Everyone's definition might slightly differ, but there is a universal awareness of this idea in all human beings. It's a principle.



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Other principles include honesty, dignity, integrity, service, excellence, potential, growth, patience, nurturance and encouragement. Those are **deep, fundamental truths with universal applications**, and those are the truths that need to be internalized into habits for people to choose empowering practices to build their lives on. We can spot them by trying to live an effective life based on their opposites. Few—if any—would believe that unfairness, deceit, baseness, uselessness, mediocrity or degeneration are the ingredients of happiness and success.

### Principles of Growth and Change

*“The glitter of the PE. the massive appeal. is that there is some quick and easy way to achieve quality of life—personal effectiveness and rich, deep relationships with other people—without going through the natural process of work and growth that makes it possible.”*

We must honor **our needs for sequential stages of growth and development**. And yes it also applies to our emotional life, our relationships and our personal character. We must accept where we are now, understand our skills levels and biases and take the necessary steps to bridge the gaps between where and who we are and where and who we want to be. Just as we cannot decide that we are a great piano player before learning how to play it, we cannot decide that we have great character before we get intentional with learning what it takes. The author takes the example of listening, the first step of healthy relating.

*“Listening involves patience, openness, and the desire to understand—highly developed qualities of character. It’s so much easier to operate from a low emotional level and to give high-level advice.”*

### The Way We See The Problem IS The Problem

We must look at our **acute problems as symptoms of the underlying issues**. Instead of focusing on finding quick fixes, we must use the problem to show us what is the chronic condition causing the problem. We need to understand which paradigm created the situation we’re now in and work on that level first before seeing if a new book or technique can make the current situation disappear. If we feel disrespected, we need to look at our relationship with respect before trying to change those around us. If we feel that we’re always short on time, we need to reconsider our relationship with time itself before getting a new planner. We must own our part and then look at the outside world.

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### A New Level of Thinking

Deep and foundational problems cannot be solved at the surface level. This book will guide us toward a new level of thinking. In his own words, this book is “a principle-centered, character-based, “inside out” approach to personal and interpersonal effectiveness. 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.”

Character comes before personality, as do private victories before public ones and as does keeping promises to ourselves come before keeping promises to others.

We must choose an upward spiral of growth understanding how to build first responsible independence and then effective interdependence.

“If there isn’t deep integrity and fundamental character strength,

the challenges of life will cause true motives to surface

and human relationship failure will replace short-term success.”

“What we ARE communicates far more eloquently than anything we say or do”.

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BOOK CLUB DISCUSSIONS

**SAVE THE DATE**

**You're invited**

**Tuesday, October 24th**

from 7pm-8pm

*Virtual Zoom Meeting*

**OR**

**Friday, October 26th**

from 12pm-1pm

*Virtual Zoom Meeting*