

# THE 7 HABITS OF HIGHLY EFFECTIVE PEOPLE

## BOOK DIGEST

### Habit 2 : BEGIN WITH THE END IN MIND – Principles of Personal Leadership

*“What lies behind us and what lies before us are tiny matters compared to what lies within us  
–Oliver Wendell Holmes”*

Stephen Covey offers a powerful **visualization exercise** to do when you have some time and space available to really immerse yourself in the experience. Take a moment to then visualize your own funeral, as a member of the gathered crowd, and think about what you would truly want your loved ones to say and remember about you on that day:

*“What character would you like them to have seen in you? What contributions, what achievements, would you want them to remember? Look carefully at the people around you. What difference would you like to have made in their lives?”*

#### What it means to “begin with the end in mind”

This exercise has allowed you to touch on **your deep and fundamental values**, to reconnect to our **inner guidance system** which is at the heart of our circle of influence.

Beginning with the end in mind means beginning today with the image and paradigm of the **end of our lives** as a **reference** which we’ll use to examine that comes between now... and then.

“Each part of your life—today’s behavior, tomorrow’s behavior, next week’s behavior, next month’s behavior—can be examined in the context of the whole, of what really matters most to you. By keeping that end clearly in mind, you can make certain that (...) each day of your life contributes in a meaningful way to the vision you have of your life as a whole.”

It requires us to start with a **clear vision of the destination**, allowing us to then make sure every step we take is in the right direction. Otherwise, it’s very easy to fall into a very ineffective busyness, to climb the wrong ladder, to fall into what the author calls an activity trap.

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*“People often find themselves achieving victories that are empty successes that have come at the expense of things they suddenly realize were far more valuable to them. People from every walk of life—doctors, academicians, actors, politicians, business professionals, athletes, and plumbers—often struggle to achieve higher income, more recognition of a certain degree of professional competence, only to find that their drive to achieve their goal blinded them to the things that really mattered most and now are gone.”*

We can indeed be very efficient... without being very effective. That’s why we need to clearly understand our own definition of success thanks to exercises such as the funeral visualization and make sure we’re not following someone else’s map of a happy life.

*“If the ladder is not leaning against the right wall,  
every step we take just gets us to the wrong place faster.”*

### All things are created twice

Indeed all things are **first created mentally** (first creation) and **then physically** (second creation).

When used the right way, our minds allow us to get crystal clear on what we then want to build. We can extract the blueprint from this mental work and then develop construction plans. All of this before the first stone of the project is placed on the ground. If we make sure that the blueprint is thought through and accurate, we can truly begin with the end in mind.

**Most failures begin with the first creation** being rushed or overlooked, in business... or in parenting when one can forget in their daily interactions with their children that the goal is to foster their self-discipline and self-esteem, not to hinder them.

By understanding the principle of two creations and by taking responsibility for both, we can **enlarge** the border of our circle of **influence**.

### By design or default

Not all first creations are made through conscious design. This is why we must develop our self-awareness and make sure to take responsibility for all our first creations. Otherwise, **other people and circumstances will shape most of our lives for us** and **we’ll live reactively** to the scripts handed to us by our family of origin, culture or environment.

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*“The scripts come from people, not principles. And they rise out of our deep vulnerabilities, our deep dependency on others and our needs for acceptance and love, for belonging, for a sense of importance and worth, for a feeling that we matter. (...) we are either the second creation of our own proactive design, or we are the second creation of other people’s agenda, of circumstances or of past habits.”*

As Stephen Covey puts it, the first habit allowed us to realize that we’re the creator and the second habit is the “how to” of first creations.

### Leadership and management—the two creations

Leadership is the first creation, and leadership must be differentiated from management, the second creation. Management is the "how" that comes in answer to the "what" that leadership chose.

*“Management is doing things right; leadership is doing the right things”*

*Peter Drucker and Warren Bennis*

Leadership allows us to create a compass and to set the destination. It is far more useful than the roadmap itself, which can be hard to draw ahead of time.

S.C. reminds us that there can be no successful management under a failing leadership, and this is why leaders must be careful not to fall into a management paradigm. Leaders are not meant to control or monitor efficiency, they’re meant to set the conditions for efficiency to thrive. And this can be applied to our parental skills and even more so when reflecting on our self-leadership abilities.

### Rescripting: becoming your own first creator

S.C. takes us back to the three unique human endowments he previously described: self-awareness, imagination and conscience. The first one allows us to witness our current paradigms and the last two empower us to write our own script.

*“In developing our own self-awareness many of us discover ineffective scripts, deeply embedded habits that are totally unworthy of us, totally incongruent with the things we really value in life.”*

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When we begin with the end in mind, we can hold on to our vision, our values and the results we truly want to attract; we can remember how we want our children, our friends, our partners to feel in our relationships down the line, and check if the way we're choosing to behave serves our goal or jeopardize our chances. We can bring back congruence with our deepest values and harmony with correct principles, by **rescripting** ourselves.

And because we wanted to have the end in mind, we had to be clear on what our destination and values were which also help us now to bring true proactivity in our lives.

### A personal mission statement

Writing a personal mission statement leads us to really zoom in on what we want to be (our character), what we want to do (our contributions and achievements) and on which values and principles we are making these decisions; thus it is the author's recommendation **to put a lot of time and attention in this powerful exercise.**

The goal is to write our own personal inner constitution and to connect to the changeless part of our nature, this part of us rooted in who we really are, what we truly want to accomplish and which values really drive us. Only then can we access our ability to change in the way we want to, and to tolerate and embrace the change constantly happening around us.

S.C. refers to **Logotherapy**, the philosophy developed by the Austrian and awe-inspiring psychiatrist **Viktor Frankl**, whom we met in the previous chapter. V. Frankl had realized that many so-called mental and emotional illnesses are in fact symptoms of an underlying sense of meaninglessness or emptiness. In logotherapy one **heals** through finding their unique **meaning** and **mission** in life.

Having a sense of mission is indeed the essence of proactivity. Clear on our values and directions, we can easily discern what is the most effective use of our time, talents and energies—and we have a way to measure them.

### At the center

The **center** of our **circle of influence** is our starting point for our personal mission statement. This is where our most basic paradigms—through which we filter the world—live.

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As S.C. explains:

*“It is here that we deal with our vision and our values. It is here that we use our endowment of self-awareness to examine our maps and, if we value correct principles, to make certain that our maps accurately describe the territory, that our paradigms are based on principles and reality. It is here that we use our endowment of conscience as a compass to help us detect our own unique talents and areas of contribution. It is here that we use our endowment of imagination to mentally create the end we desire, giving direction and purpose to our beginnings and providing the substance of a written personal constitution”*

It’s also where our focused efforts will yield the greatest results. And this leads us to another powerful concept of this book: what we put at the center of our lives is the source for the four major wells we rely on most: **security, guidance, wisdom and power**. Four **interdependent** factors that are our **life support** and which allow us to develop:

*“the great force of a noble personality, a balanced character, a beautifully integrated individual.”*

They **undergird every other dimension of our lives**, each on a virtuous continuum allow us to create independent strength and the basis for rich interdependent relationships.

He defines security as our sense of worth, grounding and personal growth, guidance as our source of direction in life, wisdom as our sense of balance, wholeness and perspective on life and power as the vital energy to make decisions and choices, including creating habits that truly serve.

### Alternative centers

We must become aware of where the center of our circle of influence currently is and of how it affects each and every aspect of our daily lives. The author then describes the **most common centers** people identify with and how they make it difficult to find lasting security and power or to connect to a true sense of guidance and wisdom (you’ll also find a table summarizing all those concepts in the book):

- Spouse Centeredness
- Family Centeredness
- Money Centeredness
- Work Centeredness
- Possession Centeredness
- Pleasure Centeredness
- Friend/Enemy Centeredness
- Church Centeredness
- Self Centeredness

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“There is little security, guidance, wisdom, or power in the limited center of self (...).

On the other hand, paying attention to the development of self in the greater perspective of improving one’s ability to serve, to produce, to contribute in meaningful ways, gives context for dramatic increase in the four life-support factors.”

### Identifying your center

Analyzing from where you currently find your sense of security, guidance, wisdom and power is the best way to identify what is the current center of your circle of influence.

Most people oscillate between different centers according to a variety of influences playing upon their lives. Getting clarity on this will help us define how to create a **clear, unique center based on principles**, in order to empower us and bring both congruency and harmony to our lives.

### A principle center

“Principles are deep, fundamental truths, classic truths, generic common denominators. They are tightly interwoven threads running with exactness, consistency, beauty and strength through the fabric of life.”

Principles are bigger than people and circumstances and that’s why they endure and allow us to find solid grounds to build on.

Those principles do not change, however, as we involve our understanding of them will deepen and expand. Our security then comes from their changeless nature, our wisdom and guidance can be based on correct maps and we can rely on:

*“the personal power of a self-aware, knowledgeable, proactive individual, unrestricted by the attitudes, behaviors, and actions of others or by many of the circumstances and environmental influences that limit other people.”*

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The benefits of being a principle centered person are:

- The will to look at the whole when looking for a solution, standing apart from the emotions and circumstances in order to understand all the options and their consequences, proactively choosing our response to the situation.
- Knowing that our decision is effective since principles have predictable long-term results.
- Our choices contribute to our ultimate value in life, and our lived experiences take on quality and meaning in the context of our life as a whole.
- Because we are independent, we can be effectively interdependent.
- Feeling comfortable with our decisions.

*“As a principle-centered person, you see things differently.*

*And because you see things differently, you think differently, you act differently.*

*Because you have a high degree of security, guidance, wisdom and power*

*that flows from a solid, unchanging core.*

*you have the foundation of a highly proactive and highly effective life.”*

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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 27th**

from 12pm-1pm

*Virtual Zoom Meeting*