

Essay on of highly effective people

[Technology](#), [Development](#)



RESPONSE: THE SEVEN HABITS

Response: The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People

The Seven Habits of Highly Effective Person is one of those books that I feel could really help me develop into a better person. I agree with Jim Collins who wrote in the foreword that the book is not guide on how to succeed in life or a career. It is not the usual self-help good. Rather, the book is about character development.

It is hard to question Covey's underlying philosophy in the development of character. It is character that determines who we are, how we feel, and how we react and respond to everything around us. The book is an attempt to teach us what Covey calls the character ethic. " The Character Ethic taught that there are basic principles of effective living, and that people can only experience true success and enduring happiness as they learn and integrate these principles into their basic character."

Unfortunately, through the years, we have been taught and adopt the personality ethic. The personality consists of contrived behavior patterns all aimed for the individual to gain advantage over others. A person's character determines everything that he does. It even affects how people perceive us. So it affects how we relate to people and how they relate to us. As Covey quotes Ralph Waldo Emerson, " What you are shouts so loudly in my ears I cannot hear what you say."

Because of the emphasis on the personality ethic, we never got to develop our character. All our decisions and actions are based on personal gain, rather than on what is good or right. Covey aptly puts in his quotation of William George Jordan:

“ Into the hands of every individual is given a marvelous power for good or evil— the silent, unconscious, unseen influence of his life. This is simply the constant radiation of what man really is, not what he pretends to be.”

When I first browsed the book, I thought it would really be wonderful to learn and practice all that it is teaching. Regardless if I am able to develop and practice the seven habits, reading the book would have been a profound journey into self-discovery.

Private Victory

The starting point of acquiring the seven habits is with oneself. It may involve shifting paradigms. One may have to change his whole body of beliefs and practices. He will have to learn and understand what principles are. One must shift to a principle-centered paradigm.

Principles are not practices. Much less are they values. After all, even evil people could have principles. It is important that one distinguishes the correct and wrong principles, what is good and what is right. Principles are the building blocks one's habits. Through time, these habits become one's values once they have become a part of one's life. One will not need to exercise conscious effort to make decisions based on one's values.

We all have bad habits that we may want to correct. The problem is how and where to start? Happily, we should be able to do that if we follow what Covey teaches. It takes about two weeks to develop a habit. One will just have to practice something religiously, everyday if possible. After a while, one will get used to it and it will become a habit.

This is something I am particularly interested in and would really want to learn.

First Habit: Be Proactive –Principles of Personal Vision . Covey suggests that one should begin in thinking about his vision and distinguish it from the external perception of my vision. It is not very clear as to how one can do that. I would rather follow some of the succeeding steps then go back to the vision.

Perhaps, what may be easier to do for young people like me would be to do an audit or a list of what is important and unimportant to me. I will need to spend some time on this and may need the help of more mature people. It will be a bit difficult as this is the first time I am doing. I suppose many young people my age would experience similar difficulty.

I have an idea about my ambitions in life, about what I want to become.

These do not seem to make up a vision. They do not make a picture of how I should see the future. Besides, these may change and evolve through time because I may discover certain things that I did not know before.

I can identify my circle of concerns as Covey instructed. They are a bit easy to identify as many of these cause me anxiety. However, I am a bit wary in identifying my circle of influence because I may be becoming a bit presumptuous. With the lack of certainty, I can consider those people and things I believe I can manage to help me get things done.

It is fairly easy to list everything down according to importance. The more difficult part is identifying or clarifying the principles behind every item in the list. Are they based on good or bad principles? I will have to answer that.

After doing all of these, I can now determine where I stand now. What is my vision given all of these? Only after that will I be able to determine where I

want to go and be guided with the correct principles. As Covey pointed out, “ But until a person can say deeply and honestly, ‘ I am what I am today because of the choices I made yesterday,’ that person cannot say, ‘ I choose otherwise.’”

Following the directions of Covey can be difficult for young people especially those unfamiliar with the seven habits or anything related to the subject. It may require some juggling around of the steps to suit young people. After all, I am still a student. I still have to graduate and start work like the people the Covey is addressing.

Second Habit: Begin with the End in Mind—Principles of Personal Leadership .

The second habit is perhaps a common principle that we often apply. Of course, one cannot accomplish anything if one does not know what it is he is trying to achieve. One has to set goals. One has to set the right goals. Otherwise he may find himself going moving forward, progressing in the wrong direction. It is important that one is clear about his vision and values on which his actions would be anchored. Clarity of these things would help guide both the setting of the goals and the actions that would lead to the goals.

I am having a bit of difficulty in the discussion of the principle of “ all things are created twice” . I think Covey assumes that one should have a solid foundation in faith, that there is a God that caused everything first. I will have to accept that there is a first cause. After all, I already exist as a person, aside from my parents there must have been moving force before anything else. The second cause is a matter of one’s decision. One will have to decide on a goal to follow. It is a conscious effort, one by design rather

than default.

The agreeable thing about the second habit is that it is easy to follow. I can apply to my personal life, to how I deal with my family. I can even apply to specific projects, even those that I need to finish in school. This paper is an example to which I applied the second habit.

After I have set my goal, I will have to work things backwards. I will have to see and understand every step that I will have to do in order to reach my goal.

In order to be able to achieve my goals, I must apply certain leadership principles. Simple tasks would have simple goals. However, these are goals nonetheless. One has to follow certain steps to attain them. Unfortunately, some of these tasks or goals can be boring. So, to finish the task, I need to have to inspire and motivate myself as a leader would do for other people.

Third Habit: Put First Things First: Principles of Personal Management . Life is not simple as having only one goal. One has to attend to many things day-to-day. There are important matters that should be addressed in stages as these things would affect one's life in the long term.

At the same, there are urgent matters that one has to address immediately. These are matters that could affect a person adversely at that very moment. They can derail a person from all his plans. For instance, a fire needs to be put out immediately. Otherwise, an uncontrolled fire could burn the entire house and ruin everything. That is the same problem with illnesses. If anyone should get sick, one has to attend to that person immediately and help him get well.

Aside from the important and the urgent, there are plenty of seemingly

mundane things that one has to attend to. Parents will have to attend to their children's basic and daily needs. They will have to make sure that they have food available and that their children eat properly. As a student, I will have to study and take periodic exams—no matter how much I may not like them. One will have to do all these things.

The discipline of management now becomes important. The habit tries to develop that in the person. One cannot do everything all at the same time. So, the tasks will have to be planned and scheduled appropriately. They will have to be classified according to their importance and urgency.

The third habit is perhaps one of the most difficult to develop. It is at the core of whether people could actually do what is needed to succeed. Covey even wrote a book entitled *First Things First*. He wrote a complete book to expound on the topic.

Covey also explains this habit in *First Things First* and demonstrates by analogy in his lectures recorded in a video . He asks the audience to fit into a fish bowl seven large rocks and a container of small rocks. The volunteer could not fit all of the contents into the bowl when she placed the small rocks first before the big rocks. When she put the big rocks first, she was able to fit everything. So, one must prioritize the more important things before doing the smaller and minor things. Of course, the urgent will have to take priority over every other thing first. However, if one is able to plan and do things right to begin with, there should be few crises to attend to.

This is one of the habits that is easier said than done. I may be able to develop the habit once I have mastered it already.

The problem is that the third habit may not be applicable into every

situation. For instance, in taking quantitative exams, it is best practice to answer the easier questions first, and then answer the more difficult ones later. This is to avoid running out of time. It may take a higher level of maturity for one to be able to practice this habit. It would require a solid understanding of one's vision and the principles that one advocates. Still, it is a good habit to develop. There can be no argument against the principle that more important things should be prioritized over less important ones.

Public Victory

After a thorough introspection and conscious action to change for the better, only then can one begin addressing the external environment. In relating to other people, the importance of having a character ethic becomes manifest. The three habits seem to rest heavily on this ethic.

We do not live on this earth by our lonesome. We live with our families, in a society, with other people. We cannot live alone. In order to succeed, we must be able to harness everything together. We have live interdependently and achieve synergy. Success here does not mean individual success only. It includes the collective success of everyone else.

Covey introduces the concept of “ emotional bank accounts” as a paradigm of interdependence. It means that to have a harmonious relationship with other people, we should deposit and withdraw from that account. We cannot continually expect others to be supporting us all the time. We cannot withdraw from that account all the time. We should also deposit at the same times. Covey identifies five important steps to make that account flourish: (1) understand the individual, (2) attend to little things, (3) keep

commitments, (4) clarify expectations, and (5) show personal integrity. He adds to these two important groups of laws: the laws of love and the laws of life. Habits four to six are built on the paradigm of the emotional bank account and the two sets of laws. He also calls these habits as the habits of interdependence.

This is the area where the book differs from all other management development books. The book is considered a management book yet it talks about emotions, love and life. I myself feel uneasy reading these, but they make sense. People cannot relate well to other people if they do not understand these things. These are matters that are not often discussed in management books.

Fourth Habit: Think Win/Win—Principles of interpersonal Leadership . Covey notes that “ character is the foundation of Win/ Win, and everything else builds on that foundation” . To have Win/Win situations, a person’s character should strongly manifest three important traits: (1) integrity, (2) maturity (balance of consideration and courage), and abundance mentality. From the foundation of character, relationships could be built. The emotional bank account plays a large role in this regard. From the relationships flow agreements and other things that lead to a Win/Win performance or situation.

Indeed, character plays a strong role in this habit. It takes a person of strong character and of humility in order to pursue a Win/Win situation. Only a person of strong character and solid values pursue a Win/Win situation. It requires giving up of certain things that one desires for the common good and greater benefit of all. It seems like a paradox. In giving up, one and

everybody else end up gaining more.

Fifth Habit: Seek First to Understand, then To Be understood—Principles of Empathic Communication . Quiet. Listen. Sometimes one feels like shouting that to people. We are having so many problems because people do not want to listen. Before anyone can solve a problem, one needs to know what the problem is and what caused it. One needs to understand the problem. That could be helped done if one listens and understands other people. Understanding other people also helps us to develop communication skills so others will also understand us. People perceive things differently. If we understand other people, we can adjust how we communicate with them.

As with the fourth habit, doing this requires abidance to a strong character ethic.

Sixth Habit: Synergize—Principles of Creative Cooperation . Covey says of synergy, “ when properly understood, synergy is the highest activity in all life— the true test and manifestation of all of the other habits put together.” Synergy can be observed in nature. Note how plants survive and thrive with the help of everything in its environment. That is how all species in nature have survived: through synergy. It can even be observed in the classroom. There is synergy if the whole is greater than the sum of its parts.. Synergy is something that can be attained only after the first five habits have been acquired and put into practice. We are not able to observe synergy in the way people behave in society today. The wrong principles are guiding people’s vision and actions. Many people think only of themselves when they act. There can be no synergy in that.

If one thinks about, the world would be a much better place if synergy had come into play.

Renewal

I am still young and a student at that so I have not come to the point that I feel burned out or exhausted. I am still in the process of learning and acquiring knowledge. I still feel far from needing any renewal. Yet this section of the book is one that I found most interesting, especially when I think about my future.

Seventh Habit: Sharpen the Saw—Principles of Balanced Self-Renewal . The seventh habit—sharpen the saw or the—is the most interesting and my favorite among the habits.

The seventh habit is very apparent among professionals in the academe—teachers, professors, among others. It seems to come naturally among these people. I suppose this is also true for artists, doctors and any other professional that has remained at the top of his field.

The process of self-renewal has four dimensions: spiritual, mental, physical, and social and emotional . Unfortunately, we usually associate renewal mainly with the mental and secondly with the physical dimension. The social-emotional dimension is usually addressed when problems arise. Sadly, people think the least about the spiritual dimension. From Covey's perspective, it would seem to be of equal importance with the other three.

The importance of continually checking on and renewing the spiritual aspect of our life needs to be emphasized. After all, it is this dimension that determines which principles are right and wrong. In turn, these principles determine everything else. Without spiritual strength, the principles underlying our habits and values could have changed. It is perhaps the

neglect of this dimension that has caused a lot of conflicts and problems in this world. All four dimensions should be addressed so one can have a balanced self-renewal.

Inside-Out Again

Life is a continuous process of learning and improving oneself. The seven habits do not end after completing the whole process once. To succeed in life, one must periodically renew oneself and start the process again from the first to the seventh habit.

Universality and Self-Discovery

Covey, a member of the faculty of the Brigham Young University, disclosed his beliefs at the end of the final chapter. He believes in God and abides by the principles embodied in the natural law, among other things. His writings aim to help people align themselves to the principles underlying his beliefs. Even if he has written all these principles in the book, he continually struggles to live by what he shared.

Even if one does not share Covey's beliefs and faith, one can still apply the lessons he taught in the book. I am impressed at the universality of his message. Anyone can actually instill in oneself the lessons in the book. One need not be a member of any religion to be able to learn and practice the habits Covey is teaching. The important thing is that one should distinguish between right and wrong, and follow what is right. In this area, a solid and constant set of beliefs would help. One's belief in truth needs to be constant and unchanging. Otherwise one would be changing the principles he believes in and thus also the habits one is trying to develop.

Moreover, the book seems to have been written for professionals working in corporations. I found it still applicable to an individual and a student like myself. It is actually applicable to anyone, even someone who is not working in an office.

As I have mentioned, my favorite habit is the seventh: Sharpen the saw—Principles of balanced self-renewal. While I am still young and still studying, I learned to appreciate the importance of studying well. In the future, I may have to go back to what I have learned in my younger years. I may have to review these so I can do whatever task. I think it is important that I learn my lessons well right now. Sharpening the saw or reviewing my learnings in later years would not be that difficult. It would be an enlightening exercise especially since I would be looking at the past with hopefully greater maturity and wisdom.

Of course, the first habit—Be proactive: Principles of personal vision—is the most important of all. It is the starting point of everything. I cannot achieve anything without deciding and clearing up what I truly believe in. I cannot start until I realize the principles I want to pursue.

I am still a long way from developing and being able to apply the seven habits. However, reading the book has indeed become a journey of self-discovery. I got to think about the things I believe in and stand for. Hopefully, I will be able to clearly define my goals and principles in life.

References

Covey, S. R., 1989. *The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People: Restoring the Character Ethic*. New York (NY): Simon and Schuster.

Covey, S. R., 2004. Big Rocks. In: *The Eighth Habit: Sixteen Inspirational*

Companion Films. New York (NY): Free Press.

Covey, S. R., 2013. The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People: Powerful Lessons in Personal Change. 25th Anniversary ed. New York (NY): Simon and Schuster.

Covey, S. R., Merrill, A. R. & Merrill, R. R., 1994. First Things First. New York: Simon & Schuster.