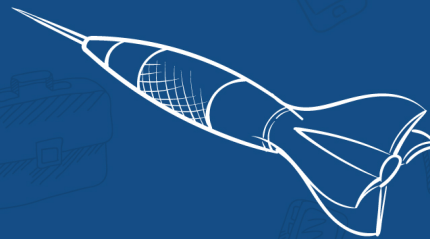


SUMMARY THE **7** HABITS OF HIGHLY EFFECTIVE PEOPLE

STEPHEN R. COVEY



QuickRead
FREE BOOK SUMMARIES

Summary of «The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People» by Stephen R. Covey

Written by Lea Schullery

The perfect guide to adopting seven habits of effective people that can improve your life and the lives of those around you.



QuickRead

F R E E B O O K S U M M A R I E S

Go to QuickRead.com/App now to download our app and get access to thousands of free book summaries as both text and audiobooks.

Get the key insights of non-fiction books in minutes instead of hours. Listen to our free audiobooks while you workout or on your commute to work.



Introduction

Everyone wants to succeed. But what makes others succeed and others fail? First off, what defines success? While others may find that they have found financial success, they may find that they are empty in other areas of life such as in their relationships or in developing personal effectiveness.

Through studying 200 years of literature, Covey found the concept of success has changed significantly over the years. While success was based on character ethics like integrity, humility, and courage before 1920, success is now based on personality ethics like public image, attitude, and personality. To find true success and see true change, you won't be able to take shortcuts. Instead, you will need to address the underlying conditions and allow yourself to undergo a paradigm shift, change yourself fundamentally and adopt the seven habits of highly effective people.

Principles and Paradigms

The 7 habits of highly effective people begins by looking inward and starting from the inside-out. As a society, we attempt to create lives on social media that are aimed to portray happiness and near-perfection. And considering social media is a mere highlight reel of a person's life, we may find ourselves altering our appearances on the outside while struggling internally. Stephen Covey asks his readers to think about what they most value in life, and imagine if everything were taken away tomorrow, what would you desire most? Will social media followers be on that list? Probably not.

So how can identifying these values help you improve your life? By improving yourself from the inside-out. Before you can change your life, you must work on digging deep inside of yourself and identify your fundamental habits and belief systems. These principles are at the core of your character and serve as a compass to guide you towards your goals. Perhaps your principles are concepts like fairness, honesty, and integrity. These are popular principles that guide our actions and lead to success; however, principles such as selfishness and deceit can lead to failure. Principles are laws of nature, and you reap what you sow; therefore, it's important to reflect on your core principles and determine if your character guide is working with nature, or against it.

Similar to following a map of a city to guide your way around, we follow our paradigms to guide us in life. A paradigm is a subjective basis for how we view the world around us. Everything we understand about the world is formed by our paradigms. For instance, a person with a negative paradigm will view a rainy day as gloomy and an inconvenience when going about their day, but a person with a positive paradigm will view a rainy day as an opportunity for growth and provides nature with the sustenance needed for survival.

Shifting our paradigm is essential when seeking to make lasting changes. Once we shift our paradigms, then we can change our character, our habits, and our behaviors. This shift in character is why it's important to recognize and monitor your own paradigms so you can find out which ones are holding you back from reaching your goals. Author Stephen Covey experienced a paradigm shift one morning when on a New York City subway, a peaceful scene where most people were either reading or resting their eyes. Suddenly, a man entered with his rowdy children immediately disrupting the peace and serenity. Annoyed by this, Covey asked the man if he could control his children. The man, tired and exasperated, replied that he should do something but their mother had just passed away an hour earlier and they were all in shock.

Covey's paradigm quickly shifted from irritated and annoyed to one of compassion with a desire to help. So you see, paradigm shifts can change your perspective about a situation, and while not all shifts will be as immediate as the one Covey experienced that morning on the subway, they can each make a powerful change in your life.

So, unlike social media where you might work on covering your flaws and imperfections, this book will help you identify those qualities. Once you identify your biggest problems in life, you will be able to view your problems from different angles and find their weaknesses. Working from the inside-out and changing your habits, you can improve your life.

Habit #1 - Be Proactive

Imagine life is just a book with blank pages. If you had the opportunity to write your own story, what would you want it to say? If your life were to end today, what would the book contain? Would the book contain stories of a person who accomplished nothing because you were a victim of your environment? Or would the book contain stories of a person who took action despite their physical environment?

Here's where we have our first principle. The principle of ownership. We can take control of our lives. It's so easy to place blame on others for the status of our lives, but it becomes futile. "It's not my fault" and "I had no control over what happened" are common phrases that we say when we find ourselves in sticky situations, but when we start to take ownership of our lives, we adopt a new principle and our world begins to change. The principle of ownership forces us to admit that we let ourselves go, but it also forces us to take ownership of the successes in our life. This paradigm shift begins the first habit: be proactive.

People who are proactive take action. They take response-ability in their life and assume ownership. For instance, proactive people don't wait for a diagnosis to make a healthy lifestyle change. They don't wait for their boss to give them instructions, instead, they identify problems and come up with solutions. They actively listen to the people in their lives and don't wait for a fight to begin communicating effectively.

To help you identify the difference between proactive people versus reactive people, imagine a Circle of Concern. This circle represents all the things that you worry about. Maybe you're worried about paying a bill or flying across the country. Inside the Circle of Concern is the Circle of Influence which represents all the things you can do something about. Reactive people focus on the Circle of Concern, unlike proactive people who focus on the Circle of Influence.

By focusing on the things they can change, proactive people shrink their Circle of Concern. One way to begin taking ownership is through language. Proactive people use words like “I will,” “I can,” and “I prefer,” whereas reactive people use “I can’t,” “I have to,” and “If only.” Reactive people believe they are not responsible for their actions and words. So, instead of saying things like “he makes me so mad,” shift your focus to “I control my own feelings” and begin converting reactivity into proactivity.

Once you realize that you have a blank book to write, you can begin filling it with what you want it to say. Focus on finding solutions instead of blaming outside sources for your problems, and begin changing the way you react to the problems in your life. Take responsibility, take ownership, and begin filling your pages with stories of someone that took action.

Habit #2 - Begin with the End in Mind

Imagine you are building a house from scratch. How would you begin this process? You would first envision what you want the house to look like, right? You determine the layout of the house and then figure out every detail. Construction workers would then follow the blueprint to begin building. Without this blueprint, what mistakes could be made? Perhaps they forget a key element, like stairs! Now, imagine your life as a blueprint. What is your end goal? What do you want to achieve? Planning is necessary for the success of any project, including your life. Here's where the Principle of Direction comes in.

To begin with the end in mind, you need direction. Just like building a home, a direction is necessary for success. Effective people don't just work hard and expect success to fall upon them, instead, they have a sense of direction in life. But how can you find that direction? Well, you can begin by imagining thirty days from now your friends and family are attending your funeral. What would you want those people to say about you? What are they saying about how you lived your life? By determining what you want your friends and family to say about you helps you realize what your life is centered around. Perhaps you're family-centered, money-centered, work-centered, or even self-centered. By imagining the end of life, you can determine how you want to live.

When answering these questions, you create your Personal Mission Statement which is the first step toward implementing habit 2. Your mission statement is meant to serve as a compass and guide you to take the necessary steps to ensure your personal success and happiness. However, writing a mission statement isn't something that just comes overnight, it will take time, patience and deep introspection. Similar to writing a blueprint, you will probably need to complete several rewrites.

If you imagine your personal statement as the blueprint of your life, you can begin to take action with purpose and intention. Just like each brick has a

purpose in building a house, your actions should have a purpose in helping you achieve your end goals.

Habit #3 - Put First Things First

Now that you have determined your values and principles, how can you begin taking action and living by those principles? By incorporating habit 3: Put first things first. How many times do you schedule out your week, but then end up wasting time on things that aren't important? You feel as if you have no control over the several phone calls, meetings, and daily interruptions that hinder you from accomplishing your true goals. Perhaps you try to incorporate time-management skills, but find that most techniques focus on efficiency, not effectiveness. So, how do you change this? By prioritizing and ensuring the most important tasks are done first. Put everything else aside and get to those tasks later.

While this sounds seemingly easy, you might find that you struggle to determine which tasks are important and which are a waste of time. Luckily, Covey has a tool to help you figure that out. The Time Management Matrix is much more effective than just creating a to-do list of what needs to get done. By categorizing your tasks into urgency and importance, you create a 2 by 2 matrix.

- Quadrant One focuses on tasks that are both urgent and important. While this seems like a critical quadrant, this is more for tasks that become outside of our control like crises that need to be dealt with right away. A deadline-driven project or the house burning down, can both fit into this quadrant.
- Quadrant Two focuses on tasks that are important, but not urgent. This is the most critical quadrant, as these are the tasks that are most important to us. These tasks include building relationships or planning for the future, these are important principles that will not happen overnight. Spend your time taking action that focuses on building upon the tasks you put into quadrant two. For instance, if you want to improve your relationships, take the time to call a friend or family member on your car ride home versus listening to music or your favorite podcast.

- Quadrant Three focuses on tasks that are not important but are urgent. These tasks are those that interrupt our days, such as phone calls or meetings. If you find yourself prioritizing tasks in quadrant three, you end up responding to tasks that are based on the priorities of others, not yourself. This can lead to several consequences like short-term focus or feeling like your life is out of control.
- Quadrant Four focuses on tasks that are neither important nor urgent. These tasks include those that are a complete waste of time like watching an entire series of Netflix in one day or mindlessly scrolling social media while at work. These tasks lead to a life of complete dependence and cause people to get fired from jobs.

So why focus on quadrant two? As mentioned previously, these are tasks that are most important to us. They focus on building relationships, planning, exercising, and preparation. All things that are critical to your happiness, but you set them aside because you think you don't have the time for them. But how can you make time for them? By learning to say no to other activities. Say no to activities that even seem urgent at the time and learn how to delegate effectively.

By prioritizing quadrant 2, you begin to approach your tasks through the inside-out. You begin with your solid core of principles, and once problems arise, you begin to see them as pieces of a whole versus a whole itself. For instance, when working with shopping-center managers, Covey realized that while the managers knew building relationships with store owners was important and would have a positive impact, they spent less than 5% of their time doing it. Instead, managers spent most of their time on quadrant one tasks like answering phone calls and emails, attending meetings, and writing reports. Wanting to implement a change, the managers devoted a third of their time to building relationships with store owners and the impact was huge. Managers saw an increase in satisfaction and lease revenue. The managers prioritized quadrant two and shifted their perceptions of quadrant one as just pieces of the puzzle, and said no to the tasks that were not important.

If you want to begin implementing habit three, the best way to begin is by creating your own matrix and identifying the tasks in quadrant two that you have been neglecting. Commit to working on quadrant two in writing and begin prioritizing your actions.

Habit #4 - Think Win-Win

Life is a dog-eat-dog world. It's about fierce, ruthless competition and if you have to lie and cheat to get what you want, then so be it. Do you believe that? Is life actually a dog-eat-dog world? If you're having to lie and cheat, aren't you going against your principles of honesty and integrity? Unfortunately, this is a mindset that many people possess in today's society. They believe that to win, you have to lose. But what if I told you that life doesn't have to be that way? Instead, life doesn't have to be a competition, both parties can win. By creating a win-win mindset, you can begin to establish successful, interdependent relationships.

Adopting a win-win mindset might mean shifting your paradigm of human interaction. In fact, there are 6 paradigms that Covey explains.

- The first is the Win-Win paradigm in which both people win. Problems are resolved by creating a mutually beneficial solution that satisfies both parties.
- The second is the Win-Lose paradigm in which people think "If I win, you lose." Win-lose people use their power, position, and credentials to influence others to get what they want.
- The third is the Lose-Win paradigm in which people think "If I lose, you win." Lose-win people aim to please those around them and seek popularity and acceptance.
- The fourth is the Lose-Lose paradigm in which both people lose. Whenever two "win-lose" people or two determined, stubborn, and ego-driven people negotiate with one another, it will always end in a lose-lose situation.
- The fifth is the Win paradigm in which people simply don't care what the outcome is for the other party as long as they win.
- 1. The final paradigm is the Win-Win or No Deal mindset in which people believe if a mutually beneficial agreement cannot be made, then no deal will be made.

When trying to find a solution, the most important thing is to be conscious of finding one that stays in line with your principles. This is an example of the Principle of Abundance. The Principle of Abundance embraces an Abundance Mentality which means you believe there is more than enough for everyone. Those that don't have an Abundance Mentality instead have a Scarcity Mentality and believe that if you win, then another person has to lose. In other words, they have the "this town ain't big enough for the both of us" mentality.

If you think win-win, you'll eventually find yourself building positive relationships because you'll end up strengthening both parties rather than slowly destroying one. A good exercise to begin thinking about how you can implement this mindset is by identifying a relationship that you have that could benefit from a win-win solution. Now put yourself in the other person's shoes and write down the solutions the other person would consider a win. Now write down what you consider a win. Try and come up with a solution that incorporates wins that mutually benefit each party.

Habit #5 - Seek First to Understand, Then to Be Understood

Imagine going to the optometrist and explaining to the doctor that you're struggling to see signs that are far away. Then, the optometrist takes off his own glasses and hands them to you saying "These have worked for me for years! Try them on, they should work for you!" No questions asked, no tests are done, the doctor just offers a simple solution that most likely won't help. You wouldn't go back to that doctor, you can't trust him.

Now think about yourself going through a trying time in life: divorce, the death of a loved one, the loss of a job. Who do you seek advice from? Someone that has never been in your shoes and can't possibly understand what you are going through, or someone that understands your situation? Someone that understands! You trust people that listen to you and you respect their advice.

Whether it's a doctor or a friend, you trust people that understand what you're going through and a key to understanding is through listening. If the doctor listened to you, he would know better how to help you rather than just giving you a random pair of glasses to solve your problems. Speaking of listening, the most effective form of listening is emphatic listening which requires a paradigm shift to achieve. You see, we don't typically seek to understand first, instead, we seek to be understood. At any given moment, a person is either speaking or preparing to speak, rather than preparing to understand.

According to experts in communication, only 10% of our communication is represented by words. 30% is represented by sounds and 60% is accounted for by our body language. If we replace our typical responses with emphatic listening, you will see that you shouldn't necessarily focus on words to truly understand the other person. Instead, you should observe a conversation through feeling and meaning behind the words that are said. With words removed, what emotions are being conveyed?

While this skill takes time and practice, it's certainly not impossible to learn how to listen emphatically. Once you master the skill of seeking to understand, then you can focus on being understood. When we truly understand the other person, we can adequately communicate and present our ideas in a way that builds credibility and trust rather than tearing the other person down.

Habit #6 - Synergize

Everyone is different, right? The world would be a pretty boring place if we all thought similarly and we couldn't learn from one another. In fact, we need one another. In the previous chapter, we discussed understanding and listening to each other for effective communication. Now, we can focus on working with one another through the Principle of Team Execution, the principle that we need each other to thrive, and that both independence and interdependence are necessary for productive interactions.

By understanding and valuing the differences of another's perspective, you create the opportunity for synergy. Synergy is a concept that the combined value of each individual will be greater than if each individual remained independent. In other words, two heads are better than one. While each person thinks differently, each person offers something that can benefit the greater good. Synergy allows you to open yourself up to new opportunities with endless possibilities. Synergy allows you to listen to one another's differences and determine how to come together to tackle a shared challenge.

So how can you begin to synergize with your team? Begin with habits 4 and 5 and think about win-win situations while trying to truly understand others around you. By valuing the different perspectives and opinions that each person has, you can begin to build something greater than yourself. For instance, a great movie isn't created by one person. Look at movies like Lord of the Rings or Star Wars. Without a team of creators, designers, writers, and more, the movies would never come to life as they do. Each team member has their own strengths that they bring to the table that benefits the project as a whole. By valuing the mental, emotional, psychological differences between people, you can begin synergizing and creating something bigger than you ever could on your own.

Beginning to value these differences takes time and patience especially when there are people in your life that you don't get along with. But why

don't you get along? You might think differently than that person, so how can you begin to open yourself up to these differences? Start by creating a list of people that you don't get along with. Choose just one person and determine how their views are different than yours. How can you find synergy between your perspective and theirs? How can you be more open-minded and confident about their differences?

Habit #7 - Sharpen the Saw

Chefs use their knives every day, they constantly chop, slice, and dice eventually making their knife dull. Do they just throw the knife away and buy a new one? No, they sharpen it. Just like a chef's knife, we have to sharpen ourselves as well. We must devote time to ourselves physically, spiritually, mentally, and socially. By sharpening your saw in these four areas, you can see the results for lasting effectiveness.

Renewing yourself physically means eating well, getting sufficient rest, and exercising regularly to build flexibility, endurance, and strength. Staying physically active helps to sharpen habit one of proactivity. You have to become proactive towards your fitness rather than reacting to the forces that keep you from exercising.

Focusing on your spiritual dimension doesn't necessarily mean adopting a specific religion at all, instead, it means that you should examine your life and be mindful of your actions. The goal of renewing your spiritual self can include meditating, praying, or connecting with nature. Spiritual Dimension can help you practice habit two since you consistently revise your principals and core values.

To stay mentally healthy, you can read great books, keep a journal of your thoughts and insights, and limit television programs to only watching those that enrich your life and mind. You can also learn a new language, or take courses to learn something new. There are a variety of ways to enrich yourself mentally. Additionally, focusing on mental health will help you practice habit three since you'll be utilizing your time management skills to maximize your time and resources.

Lastly, it's important to work on your social and emotional health. Renewing yourself socially to develop meaningful relationships means you must seek to understand others, make contributions to meaningful projects that improve the lives of others, maintain an Abundance Mentality and help

others achieve their own success. By working on your social and emotional health, you are practicing habits 4, 5, and 6 by adopting a win-win mindset, seeking to understand others, and finding mutually beneficial solutions through synergy.

If you're wondering how you can work on these four dimensions, begin by making a list of activities that will help you renew yourself among each category. Select one activity from each dimension and commit to completing that activity next week. At the end of the week, evaluate your performance and question what led to your success or failure.

Final Summary

To become a highly effective person, you must adopt these seven habits:

- Be proactive. Stop reacting and begin taking action. Instead, take control and assume responsibility for your life.
- Begin with an end in mind. Stop working aimlessly on whatever job pops up. Instead, have a vision for your future, and align your actions to make that vision a reality.
- Put first things first. Stop wasting your time on tasks that seem urgent at the moment, but don't align with your goals. Instead, prioritize your tasks and focus on the non-urgent, important items.
- Think win-win. Stop thinking that you must win or lose. Instead, come up with a mutually beneficial solution for both parties.
- Seek first to understand, then to be understood. Stop jumping to provide a solution or a response. Instead, listen emphatically to understand others around you, then communicate ideas that align with another's feelings.
- Synergize. Stop working independently. Instead, use the strengths of others around you to create something you could have never created by yourself.
- Sharpen the saw. Stop working too hard. Instead, continue to work on yourself mentally, physically, spiritually, and socially.



QuickRead

F R E E B O O K S U M M A R I E S

Go to QuickRead.com/App now to download our app and get access to thousands of free book summaries as both text and audiobooks.

Get the key insights of non-fiction books in minutes instead of hours. Listen to our free audiobooks while you workout or on your commute to work.

