

SUMMARY

THE 8th

HABIT

STEPHEN R. COVEY



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Summary of “The 8th Habit” by Stephen R. Covey

Written by Alyssa Burnette

Unlock the power of the habit that can change your
life.

Introduction

5

What is the 8th Habit?

6

How to Use Your Voice

9

Take Action

11

Final Summary

13



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Introduction

The popular acronym “G.O.A.T” stands for “Greatest of All Time.” Would you use that acronym to describe yourself? Most of us probably wouldn’t, right? It might be because we feel like it’s overly self-aggrandizing, because we don’t like to draw attention to ourselves, or maybe it’s because we simply think we could never be the greatest at anything. And if the latter is true for you, then it’s time for a much-needed boost to your self-esteem! Now, obviously the G.O.A.T example is a little extreme, and you don’t necessarily need to be vain or overly prideful in assuming that you’re the best person who’s ever lived. But the author believes that it is important for everyone to embrace confidence and self-respect through finding the power of their original voice.

To embrace the power of your voice is to recognize that you-- your ideas, your thoughts, and your opinions-- have value and that you can use your voice to change the world. Maybe you’re not the greatest of all time, but you’re still powerful! You’re still awesome! And you can use your voice to make a difference. In fact, although we most commonly think of the term “influencer” in connection with popular Instagram personalities, the truth is that we are all influencers whether we realize it or not. One way or another, we influence the people around us, communicating our goals and values to others through the examples we set. The question is: how are you using your voice to impact others? And what if you feel like you haven’t even found your voice yet? Over the course of this summary, we’ll examine the author’s theories on both of those topics and learn the secret to harnessing the power of your voice.



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What is the 8th Habit?

If you find yourself asking this question, you might also have a follow-up question: if there's an eighth habit, what were the first seven? What did I miss? But don't worry; you didn't miss anything! This book's title is a nod to its predecessor, the author's first book, *The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People*. And after he outlined these wildly popular seven habits, he wanted to devote a second book to the development of an eighth. So, that's how *The 8th Habit* got started! But now that we know how the eighth habit originated, let's take a look at what it means.

As we discussed in the introduction, at its core, the eighth habit is all about finding your voice. But how do you do that? And why is it so important? To answer this question, the author invites you to turn your attention to some of our society's most pressing questions. For example, have you ever felt like you're just not original enough? Like what you have to say would just get lost in the noise of the wider conversation? A lot of people feel this way and it's all because of the prevalence of social media and technology. Because there is a blog, a talk show, a podcast, or an Instagram profile about everything, many people feel as though they're just lost in the crowd. These days, staying connected is easier than ever, but that also means we have new ways to develop insecurities. And as human beings, we're already predisposed to feeling insecure anyway! It's not like we needed the help!

So, what can we do about it? How can we learn to reclaim our voice? The author suggests that we need to start by appreciating the liberty of our personal freedom. Although we might not always think of ourselves as free, the reality is that every human being has an incredible gift: the freedom of choice. Even if we feel trapped in a job we dislike or a relationship that makes us unhappy or we feel constrained by the pressure of our responsibilities, whether we realize it or not, we still make thousands of choices every day. Every morning, for example, I choose to have a cup of coffee before I do anything else. I choose to drink sparkling water throughout my work day. In the grand scheme of things, both of these

choices are microscopic, but they make me happy. They improve my quality of life. And I have the freedom to make those choices for myself. The author asserts that the freedom of choice is one of life's greatest gifts.

But you and I also have the freedom to make choices with consequences that are far more important and life-altering. For example, if you feel trapped in a toxic relationship and you're unhappy with how that person is treating you, you have a choice to set boundaries and communicate that you refuse to be treated that way. You also have the choice to leave situations and relationships that no longer bring you joy. Although you may feel as though you're responsible for keeping others happy or meeting their needs, the truth is that placating and validating others is not your purpose in life. Ultimately, everyone is responsible for their own lives, their own happiness, and their own wellbeing. So, it's not your job to take on someone else's unpaid emotional labor.

It's also important to remember that you can't control other people's actions, but you can control how you react to them. You can do so by choosing whether you will allow yourself to stay in a toxic situation or whether you will break free. And this can apply to any situation in your life, whether it's a manipulative friend, an abusive partner, or an overly demanding supervisor. And that freedom can make all the difference in your life! In short, the author posits that you can find your voice by embracing choice. Because once you accept that you have the power to make healthy choices for your life, you will see that you can use your voice to advocate for yourself. As we discussed in the earlier example, we use our voices all the time to say things like, "I'd prefer coffee instead of tea, thanks" or "I'd like steak for dinner." But what if we grew comfortable using our voices for bigger things like saying, "I deserve to be treated with respect!" or "I matter!"

This will also help us to relinquish the feeling that we're lost in the crowd or that we're original. Because when we finally choose to prioritize and respect ourselves, we can acknowledge that there are billions of people in the world, but there's only one of you. So, no matter how many people are

already out there, there has never been someone exactly like you. That means that your job isn't to compete with the cacophony of pre-established voices. Instead, your job is to focus on becoming the most amazing version of yourself.



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How to Use Your Voice

As you apply the principles of the eighth habit in your life, you'll quickly discover that they are life-changing! But your journey doesn't stop when you find your own voice, because the next step is learning how to use it. To learn how you can use your voice, let's return to our previous example about influencers. Once you've found your voice and started living into your purpose, your next question should be: how am I leading and encouraging others? What am I influencing others to do? According to the author's principles, your job as an "influencer" is not to motivate others to live exactly like you do or to encourage them to copy your choices, but rather to model healthy behavior and set a positive example for others to follow. In short, your job is to be a leader!

We typically associate leaders with people who boldly step up and take charge or tell others what to do. But that's not what the author is advocating here. That's because he recognizes that everyone is different; some people are quiet and introverted and would prefer to work behind the scenes, without drawing attention to themselves. The leadership model of the eighth habit therefore operates with this understanding in mind. So, rather than leading in the traditional sense-- the sense that often looks more like controlling or micromanaging the people around you-- the author simply advocates that you lead by example. You can do so by drawing on your four types of intelligence.

Although some people might be more gifted in one area than another, everybody is born with four intelligences and we can develop these skills to improve our character and our leadership abilities. Physical intelligence is perhaps the most basic one; it's the internal regulation system that allows our bodies to function properly. Although we don't have much influence over this type of intelligence, we can strengthen our relationship with our bodies through physical exercise and mindfulness, both of which will help us stay in touch with our bodies and be comfortable in our own skin.

The next type is spiritual intelligence. This element is often neglected in the chaos of our busy lives, so it's especially important that we take time to develop it. You can think of your spiritual intelligence as your moral center; it's the part of you that houses your core values, your understanding of ethics, and the principles that guide you. So, if you want to be a good person who makes the world a better place, get in touch with your spiritual self!

Next in the lineup is our mental intelligence. Although we might assume that this is simply related to our IQ, it's actually a little more. IQs vary from person to person, but no matter how smart you are, everybody has the ability to think about problems and make decisions. Everybody can engage with stimuli and form a response. So, develop your mental intelligence if you want to be sharper, stronger, and more productive.

And last but not least, we have emotional intelligence. Emotional intelligence is what helps us understand ourselves and others. And even though feelings can be complicated-- and stressful at times-- we need them to connect and relate to others. So, strengthen your emotional intelligence by developing your powers of empathy. Empathy is the ability to put yourself in somebody else's shoes, to understand and validate their emotional experience. Even if you haven't felt those emotions yourself, empathy directs you to imagine how the other person feels and be kind to them.

So, if you concentrate on developing these four intelligences in yourself, you can become an incredible leader even if you work behind the scenes.

Because if you practice treating others with empathy and respect, and you bring your A-game to every problem-solving situation you encounter, you will set a stellar example for others to follow. Leading with your four intelligences requires you to maintain a constant state of improvement, to ask yourself if you're learning and growing and being the best version of yourself. And if you lead with that example, then you'll encourage others to do the same. Their choices and their voice may look different from yours, but if you're all growing and improving together, you can curate a culture of positive change.



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Take Action

Now that you've learned about the importance of finding your voice and leading with a positive example, it's time to take a look at the most important step of all. Because, as you've probably already realized, knowing the right stuff is useless if you don't take action to implement it in your life! Unfortunately, however, we often lose sight of that reality. We all know we're supposed to take action and change the course of our lives, but sometimes we feel so bogged down by negative thoughts or stressful circumstances that it feels impossible. And even though we don't mean to more or less give up, we still fall into the tempting trap of daydreaming about change. Rather than taking action to ensure that it comes true, it's easier to slog through our lives, dreaming of how we'll feel and what life will look like when better days finally come. So, as we helplessly wait, we comfort ourselves with thoughts like, "One day, it will get better," or, "When things are different, I'll..."

If that sounds like you, you're not alone. Lots of people do that! But sadly, in doing so, lots of people waste their lives and they miss out on the opportunities and joy that they could be embracing. So, how do you break the cycle? According to the author, the first step is to start by returning to the core of the eighth habit: finding your voice. Remember that finding your voice is all about choices. And if you think about it that way, you'll have to confront the reality that you had a choice and you decided to use it to wait around, hoping change will just happen to you. Is that what you want to do with your freedom of choice? If you had to use your voice to impact others, is that the message you would want to give them? Most of us would probably answer with a resounding, "No!"

So, that's why we have to choose to take action. Remember that the freedom of choice is a gift. That means that ignoring your choice to take action equates to ignoring your gift! So, don't waste the most precious gift you have. Don't choose to live as a helpless victim or allow others to take advantage of you. Taking action can be hard and it might lead you to some

uncomfortable places, but it's worth it to know that you have the power to make a difference in your own life and the lives of others. And even in situations where you can't directly change your circumstances (for example, by controlling someone else's actions), remember that you can always control how you respond. You can still choose to take action by refusing to let your circumstances bring you down. You can always choose to prioritize the development of your best self.



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Final Summary

The eighth habit centers on the principle of finding your voice. By finding your voice, you recognize that you have inherent worth, originality, and value. Accepting and living into this truth is a powerful boost for your self-esteem and it can motivate you to completely turn your life around. But once you find your voice, don't stop there! Your next objective is to take action by striving for continual growth and leading by example. Because if your goal is to become the best version of yourself, then your example should motivate others to do the same. And when you live your life according to the eighth principle, you'll find that you can make the world a better place for yourself and everyone around you.



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