

The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People

Restoring The Character Ethic

By Stephen R. Covey

The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People by Stephen R. Covey is still on the bestseller lists having sold some fifteen million copies. And, people want to know more about Covey's *The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People*. So, we decided to review *The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People* in more detail.

Borrowing slightly from the concepts of Quantum Mechanics, *The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People* begins with the astute observation that people perceive the world differently, and because we view the world with our own unique "lens," it is difficult to separate the observation from the observer.

So, part of achieving insight involves making a "paradigm shift" which causes us to perceive things differently. Covey notes that life threatening experiences or a major role change in a person's life can change a person's paradigm. Sometimes, just a little more knowledge might help us examine our paradigms.

Among his many examples, Covey tells the story of a manager who has taken management training classes and seminars and who is friendly to his employees. Yet, he doesn't feel that his employees have any loyalty toward him. He feels they lack independence and responsibility. If he took a day off, he believes his employees would goof off and stand around the water cooler talking all day.

Covey suggests the manager ask himself, "But is it possible that under that apparent disloyal behavior, these employees question whether I really act in their best interest? Do they feel like I'm treating them as mechanical objects? ..."

Our paradigms will affect how we interact with others, *which in turn will affect how they interact with us*. So, Covey argues, any effective self-help program must begin with an "inside-out" approach, rather than looking at our problems as "being out there" (an inside-out approach). We must start by examining our own character, paradigms, and motives.

Covey writes that the inside-out approach says "If you want to *have* a happy marriage, *be* the kind of person who generates positive energy and sidesteps negative energy rather than empowering it. If you want to *have* a more pleasant, cooperative teenager, *be* a more understanding, empathic, consistent, loving parent. If you want to *have* more freedom, more latitude in your job, *be* a more responsible, a more helpful, a more contributing employee. If you want to be trusted, *be* trustworthy. If you want the secondary greatness of recognized talent, focus first on primary greatness of character."

Hence, character and principles are keys to success, effectiveness, and happiness in life. *The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People* points out: "Principles are guidelines for human conduct

that are proven to have enduring, permanent value. ...One way to quickly grasp the self-evident nature of principles is to simply consider the absurdity of attempting to live an effective life based on their opposites. I doubt that anyone would seriously consider unfairness, deceit, baseness, uselessness, mediocrity, or degeneration to be a solid foundation for lasting happiness and success."

After discussing the importance of character, *The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People* jumps into the habits you should work toward creating as a part of your life. The first three habits, Covey says, are habits of independence. They will help you achieve a private victory of being more personally effective and independent.

Stephen Covey's Habits of Independence:

Habit 1: Be Proactive

Habit 2: Begin with the End in Mind

Habit 3: Put First Things First

Habit 4: Think Win/Win

Habit 5: Seek First to Understand, then to be Understood

Habit 6: Synergize

Habit 7: Sharpen the Saw