Brian Johnson's PhilosophersNotes
More Wisdom in Less Time

THE BIG IDEAS

Habit #1: Be Proactive
You are not Pavlov's dog.

Habit #2: Begin with the End in Mind
Blueprints & funerals.

Habit #3: Put First Things First
Quadrant II, saying no, planting priorities, schedule keys, roles & goals.

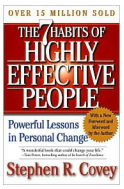
Habit #4: Think Win/Win
Are you thinking win/win?

Habit #5: Seek First to Understand
Well, are you?

Habit #6: Synergy
1 + 1 = 3+.

Habit #7: Sharpen the Saw
Renew! Meditate, journal, exercise, love.

Missions
What's yours?



The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People

Powerful Lessons in Personal Change

BY STEPHEN R. COVEY · FREE PRESS © 2004 · 384 PAGES

> "I believe that a life of integrity is the most fundamental source of personal worth. I do not agree with the popular success literature that says that self-esteem is primarily a matter of mind set, of attitude—that you can psych yourself into peace of mind. Peace of mind comes when your life is in harmony with true principles and values and in no other way."
>
> ~ Stephen R. Covey from *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People*

There's a reason *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People* was named the #1 Most Influential Business Book of the Twentieth Century and over 15 million (!!!) copies have been sold: It's a powerful book.

If you haven't read this book yet, I think you'll dig it. If it's been a while since you read it, it may be time for a re-read! In this *Note*, we're going to take a quick look at each of the 7 Habits and help you make a "paradigm" shift into living your greatest life.

Let's start by recognizing the fact that, as Covey advises: "Private Victory precedes Public Victory. Algebra comes before calculus." PRIVATE victory comes BEFORE public victory. Simply: If we want all the joys of outward success, first we must master ourselves. Let's not start by chasing outward success. Let the public acclaim flow OUT OF our own self-mastery. And may this *Note* be a part of the next step in your self-mastery!

HABIT #1: BE PROACTIVE

"Look at the word responsibility—'response-ability'—the ability to choose your response. Highly proactive people recognize that responsibility. They do not blame circumstances, conditions, or conditioning for their behavior. Their behavior is a product of their own conscious choice, based on values, rather than a product of their conditions, based on feeling."

"If not now, when?"
~ Hillel

Be Proactive. That's Habit #1. So what's it mean to "be proactive"? In short, to be proactive simply means to be "response-able"—to be capable of consciously choosing how you respond to any given situation.

Are you a Pavlovian dog—mindlessly responding to a given stimulus in your life? Not so good. Can you step BETWEEN the normal stimulus—> response patterns of your life and CHOOSE a new response to a given stimulus? Good.

So... How can *you* be more proactive and less reactive today?

Let's be proactive. Let's be response-able to the challenges we face in our lives.

COMMITMENTS

"The commitments we make to ourselves and to others, and our integrity to those commitments, is the essence and clearest manifestation of our proactivity."

Do you honor your commitments? Are you making commitments you don't want to make or

" What lies behind us and what lies before us are tiny matters compared to what lies within us."

~Oliver Wendell Holmes

have no intention of following through on? Pay attention to what you're committing to and to whom you're making those commitments.

As Covey says, your integrity to the commitments you make is one of, and perhaps THE, most important factors in living your greatest life and achieving a consistent level of joy and happiness.

Although you may not be aware of it consciously, if you have a bunch of (or a string of hundreds of) broken commitments over the last day/week/month/year/decade, you're energetically drowning in the weight of that lack of integrity.

You *know* when you're not doing the stuff you say you're going to do—whether it was getting up at a certain time this morning, working out or following a certain routine, whatever. To the extent you're not honoring those commitments, you are, to state it bluntly, not going to get very far in your life. Simple as that.

Good news is that the solution is simple as well: Start honoring your commitments.

Recommendation: Make an inventory of the commitments you have outstanding right now and get on completing those!

HABIT #2: BEGIN WITH THE END IN MIND

"Begin with the end in mind" is based on the principle that all things are created twice. There's a mental or first creation, and a physical or second creation to all things."

"Begin with the end in mind." It's Habit #2.

The idea is very simple: All great things (well, technically, all things good or bad) are created twice: First in the mind and then in reality. FIRST, we must get clear on what we want. Then we create it in reality.

Think of building a house. What's the first step? You discuss with your architect what you want to see and make some blueprints, right? You don't just bring in the construction team and get at it, do you? So why in the world don't we do that in our lives?!?!

It's stunning to me how little time we spend getting really clear on what we want—whether it's with a specific project at work or in our life in general. Ironically, we're typically MUCH better at planning a project at a job we hate than planning a life to create a job we love.

And, the greatest irony? Most of us spend the greatest amount of time "blue-printing" our vacations to escape the dread of our day-to-day grind. Imagine if, instead, we spent that time planning our ideal lives so we didn't need to escape on vacation so desperately.

* slaps head *

* steps off soap box *

It's rather simple: Get clear on your highest "end" goals and line up every thing you do today (and tomorrow and ...) to be in integrity with these ideals. If you tell me you want to be recognized as a kind, generous, loving person who always had time for her family, then guess what? BE a kind, generous, loving woman who always has time for her family NOW.

Let's begin with the end in mind and live with integrity to our ideals as we transform our lives.

Funerals

Imagine going to the funeral of a loved one. You're getting out of your car, walking into the chapel or funeral parlor. You see the flowers and the other people entering. You feel the sadness of loss and the joy of having known. Feel into that.

You walk to the front and look into the casket and suddenly come face to face with yourself.

"What one thing could you do in your personal and professional life that, if you did on a regular basis, would make a tremendous positive difference in your life? Quadrant II activities have that kind of impact. Our effectiveness takes quantum leaps when we do them."

~ Stephen R. Covey

You realize this is your funeral. Feel that. You sit down and look at the program in your hand—reading the description of your life and seeing the people who will be talking about you. What do they say? How does the program capture your life? What do your closest loved ones say about you? Your spouse or children? Your friends and colleagues?

...Now, fast-forward xx years from today. Imagine that scene of your own funeral. You have that program in your hand. What does it say? You watch your loved ones get up and speak about you and their love for you. What do they say? Who were you in their eyes?

Take some time today/this week (right now?!?) to sit down and really reflect on this. It's a *really* powerful way to gain clarity on your highest values.

HABIT #3: PUT FIRST THINGS FIRST

"Put First Things First." It's Habit #3.

The Big Idea? In Goethe's words, *"Things which matter most must never be at the mercy of things that matter least."*

So, how do you spend your days? Do you waste your time and energy doing stuff that simply isn't that important?

Recommendation: Do "first things first." Identify the truly important things in your life and in your day and in the moment. Do them. And start focusing on:

Quadrant II

"Effective people stay out of Quadrants III and IV because, urgent or not, they aren't important. They also shrink Quadrant I down to size by spending more time in Quadrant II... Quadrant II is the heart of effective personal management."

Covey has a 4-quadrant model for time management.

	Urgent	**Not Urgent**
Important	Quadrant I *Time spent in*: fire drills, crises, deadlines *Results*: stress, burnout	Quadrant II *Time spent in*: growth, exercise, relationships *Results*: happiness :)
Not Important	Quadrant III *Time spent in*: pressing stuff, interruptions *Results*: short-term focus	Quadrant IV: *Time spent in*: time wasters *Results*: you're fired!

Notice the two factors that define an activity in this model: Is it urgent? And, Is it important?

Pretty straight-forward. Urgent means it's demanding our attention (NOW!) Important means it's worth doing. Take a very close look at Quadrant II: the Important but Not Urgent stuff. We want to play there.

Unfortunately, most of us don't spend anywhere near enough time there—we're dancing in and out of the other three quadrants: distracting ourselves (IV), allowing interruptions to pester us throughout the day (III), or putting out one fire-drill-crisis after another (I).

"Dost thou love life? Then do not squander time; for that's the stuff life is made of."

~Benjamin Franklin

Eek.

Take a deep breath. Take an inventory of where you're currently spending the most time. What % do you spend where? Find (make that, SCHEDULE!) time to play in Quadrant II (even that

activity will be a Quadrant II activity).

Let's exercise, develop ourselves and our relationships, and rock Quadrant II! :)

"Effective people are not problem-minded; they're opportunity-minded."

~Stephen R. Covey

"NO."

"You have to decide what your highest priorities are and have the courage—pleasantly, smilingly, nonapologetically, to say "no" to other things. And the way you do that is by having a bigger "yes" burning inside. The enemy of the "best" is often the "good.""

"No." Please pronounce that for me. (We're going to do a little practicing.)

Say it out loud. "No."

Pleasantly. Smilingly. Non-apologetically. "No." Practice again. "No." Different tone. Bigger smile. More confidence. "No."

Good. Now, please use that "No" the next time you're asked to do something that compromises your highest vision for yourself. (Please say, "Yes!!" to that request. :)

PLANTING PRIORITIES

Question from Dr. Covey: "If you were to fault yourself in one of three areas, which would it be: (1) the inability to prioritize; (2) the inability or desire to organize around those priorities; or (3) the lack of discipline to execute around them? ... Most people say their main fault is a lack of discipline. On deeper thought, I believe that is not the case. The basic problem is that their priorities have not become deeply planted in their hearts and minds. They haven't really internalized Habit 2 [Begin with the end in mind]."

"A 'No' uttered from deepest conviction is better and greater than a 'Yes' merely uttered to please, or what is worse, to avoid trouble."

~Mahatma Gandhi

That's pretty sweet. Are your priorities planted VERY deeply into your heart and mind?

Do you *really* know who you are and what you're here to do? Begin with the end in mind. Get your priorities CRYSTAL clear. The rest will follow.

EFFICIENCY & EFFECTIVENESS

"While you can think in terms of efficiency in dealing with time, a principle-centered person thinks in terms of effectiveness in dealing with people."

How do you treat people? Are you looking to be "efficient" with them? Um. Time for a new intention.

As per Covey, leave efficiencies for dealing with time. Interacting with people? Think about how you can be effective. There are times, as he advises, "when principle-centered Quadrant II living requires the subordination of schedules to people."

"I get up every morning determined both to change the world and to have one hell of a good time. Sometimes, this makes planning the day difficult."

~ E.B. White

ROLES & GOALS

Covey provides a useful tool to help us imagine and create our ideals. He likes to say that we all have "Roles" that we play and that, to be effective, we need to create "Goals" for all those roles.

Roles and Goals. Flows nicely, eh?

So, what Roles do you have? Perhaps Husband or Wife? Mother or Father? Friend? Entrepreneur or scholar or professional?

Identify these Roles. Then create your Goals for each.

HABIT #4: THINK WIN/WIN

Win/Win. It's Habit #4.

" We have committed the golden rule to memory; let us now commit it to life."

~ Edwin Markham

We've all heard of it. The idea is simple (as all good ideas are): entering a relationship with someone? Think win/win. Think how you AND your prospective partner can BOTH win.

Very simple. But do you LIVE it?

Do you approach relationships (business or intimate) with a true desire to see the other person "win"? Or, are you focused on win/lose relationships where you're more concerned about "winning"/being right/getting the better end of the deal. (OR, are you in LOSE/win situations where you're showing up weakly and losing while the other wins?!)

Let's think about how we can truly create win/win energy in our lives.

" When getting ready to reason with a man, I spend one-third of my time thinking about myself and what I am going to say and two-thirds thinking about him and what he is going to say."

~ Abraham Lincoln

What's one relationship you need to spend more time thinking win/win about? And, what are you going to do about it? Today?

HABIT #5: SEEK FIRST TO UNDERSTAND

"Seek first to understand, then to be understood."

That's Habit #5. Seek first to understand, THEN to be understood.

It's amazing how easy it is to spend all our time trying to make sure WE are understood—forgetting to slow down and see the other person's perspective, eh?

What can you do today to try to see the other person's perspective before working so hard to make sure they get yours?!?

HABIT #6: SYNERGY

"Synergy is everywhere in nature. If you plant two plants close together, the roots commingle and improve the quality of the soil so that both plants will grow better than if they were separated. If you put two pieces of wood together, they will hold much more than the total weight held by each separately. The whole is greater than the sum of its parts. One plus one equals three or more."

Synergy. 1 + 1 = 3+.

What a beautiful concept. The word finds its roots in the Greek *sunergos* "working together."

And, as Covey points out, when we work together, one plus one equals more than two. That's amazing. I know I feel it in my intimate relationship. And have such a deep sense of gratitude for the power of our "working together."

What synergistic relationship can you be more grateful for today?

HABIT #7: SHARPEN THE SAW

Covey tells a brilliant story of a man in the forest sawing down a tree with a blunt saw. He saws and saws (and saws and saws). Working feverishly but not getting far. A passerby suggests he take a break and sharpen his saw and gets the reply, *"But I don't have time for that."* :)

Hmmmmm...

That sound like you? Definitely sounds like me on occasion! :)

Covey's 7th Habit is very straightforward: Take the time to renew. Sharpen your saw.

How? Exercise, meditate, journal, spend time with loved ones, go on vacation, play, dance, enjoy your hobbies.

Sharpen, sharpen, sharpen!

MISSIONS

" Everyone has his own specific vocation or mission in life... Therein he cannot be replaced, nor can his life be repeated. Thus, everyone's task is as unique as is his specific opportunity to implement it."

~Viktor Frankl

That was a (*very*) quick look at *The 7 Habits*. If you haven't read it yet and you're feelin' it, get a copy. We've only touched on a tiny amount of the wisdom Covey's packed in there. If you have read it, consider going back through it or diving into more of Covey's work. (The *8th Habit* is fantastic as well.)

Let's wrap up with the important question: What are YOU here to do? What's your specific vocation or mission in life? We all have one. What's yours?

Clear? Write it down! Live it!

Stuck? Write down the question: *"What is my specific mission in life?"* Then simply write down *"My specific mission in life is to ..."* and let it flow. Don't censor yourself or need it to be "right." Just write.

The process of discovering who we are and what our greatest gifts are AND how we give those to the world is, at least in my experience, an arduous one. We don't just snap our fingers and say, "Aha! That's it!" At least I didn't...

I've had many amazing ideas/breakthroughs/distinctions, but they come in the midst of (pretty much constantly) living in the question of what my mission in life is. AND having the courage to start taking the baby (and/or BIG) steps I feel intuitively called to make as I strive to live in deeper integrity to my highest values.

Here's to embodying the 7 Habits of Highly Effective People more and more in our lives today,

Brian Johnson,
Chief Philosopher

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About the Author of "The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People"

STEPHEN R. COVEY

An internationally respected leadership authority, family expert, teacher, organizational consultant, and author, Dr. Covey dedicates his life to teaching principle-centered living and leadership to individuals, families, and organizations. He holds an MBA from Harvard and a doctorate degree from Brigham Young University and has 9 children and 44 (!) grandchildren. Learn more at **StephenCovey.com.**

About the Author of This Note

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Brian Johnson is a lover of wisdom (aka a "Philosopher") and a passionate student of life who's committed to inspiring and empowering millions of people to live their greatest lives as he studies, embodies and shares the universal truths of optimal living. He harts his job.