



# The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People®

Book Club Leader Guide



# How to Use This Guide

As a discussion leader, think of what you're doing as a three-step process to maximize each participant's learning.

1. The book introduces and explains a concept.
2. The group discusses the concept and explores ways to apply it.
3. Each person decides whether to commit to personally apply the concept.

## Things to keep in mind

- Each chapter ends with “Application Suggestions” that can supplement and deepen the discussion questions contained in this document.
- Be sure to discuss how the principles apply to work and personal life. Some of the suggested questions in this document explicitly include both, but since the nature of the best discussion groups is fluid, you as the facilitator will have many unscripted opportunities to guide the discussions as appropriate.
- We all have unique paradigms based on our genetic makeup and unique life experiences. Those paradigms shape how we interpret and internalize the 7 Habits®. Be open to others' interpretations, and be careful not to judge someone's understanding as right or wrong.
- The main message of the book is to align our paradigms and behaviors with proven principles of human effectiveness. As the discussion-group facilitator, you play a key role in helping members accomplish this.

**The main message of the 7 Habits is to align our paradigms and behaviors with proven principles of human effectiveness.**

# Paradigms and Principles

## Inside out foundational principles

- What’s the difference, as Stephen Covey describes it, between the Personality and Character Ethics? Does that distinction have relevance to your life? According to Covey, what is the disadvantage of relying solely on the Personality Ethic?
- One page lists a litany of complaints, each ending with “hands thrown up in the air” resignation. Was there a time in your life when you’ve felt that way? Do you perhaps feel that way right now? What was your mindset to cause those feelings, and how does it affect your behavior? What price are you paying because of this way of thinking? What might be the payoff if you could change your thinking and your behavior?
- What does the experiment using the drawing of a younger and an older woman tell us about individual perception? Talk about how personal conditioning colors perspective in your own experiences. How difficult is it to achieve objectivity — in life generally and in your own life?

- Covey says that to change, “we must look at the lens through which we see the world.” How are you able to do this? How can we become more aware of our lenses (paradigms)? What’s a positive paradigm you have toward working with your colleagues? How does this paradigm affect your behavior and your relationships with clients? What’s a paradigm regarding your work that sometimes hurts your efforts and your results? What can you do to change it?
- Regarding the Personality and Character Ethics — is Covey suggesting it’s bad to have a personality? What’s an example of how your organization operates with clients that demonstrates high character on the part of your organization? What was a time when you demonstrated poor character as an adult or as a child? For example, you may have violated a confidence or demonstrated poor discipline. What was the outcome, in the short term and the long term? Were you able to make up for this lapse? How?
- It’s important to stay focused on strengths, which everyone has, and on how we can focus or apply these strengths. What’s one of your strongest

character attributes? What’s an example of how you’ve demonstrated this attribute with friends and family? What about with colleagues and clients?

- Why is it more important to work on your paradigms than on your behaviors? What are the consequences of paradigms that aren’t aligned with correct principles?

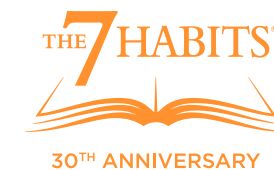
## The 7 Habits — an overview

- Describe the stages of maturity through which effective people advance: dependence, independence, and interdependence.
- Why is independence not the optimal model to follow in personal or professional environments? How can you help clients see the danger of silos vs. all pulling together? How does the concept of interdependence help change organizations?
- Why would an organization care if employees have a paradigm of interdependence vs. independence? What’s the benefit to the organization and its customers when they have a paradigm of interdependence?



**“If you want to make minor changes in your life, work on your behavior. But if you want to make significant, quantum breakthroughs, work on your paradigms.”**

— Stephen R. Covey



**Timeless  
Principles of  
Effectiveness**

# Habit 1: Be Proactive®

1. What does it mean to Be Proactive? Is this different from how you've previously defined being proactive? How? What's an example of when you've been proactive with a client? a colleague? a family member?
2. Why does Covey say Habit 1 is the foundational habit — that if we're not being proactive, we can't be truly effective in any area of our lives?
3. How well are you doing at being proactive at work? at home?
4. What's a specific situation in which you want to be more proactive at work? at home? What would the payoffs be?
5. Why does Covey say reactive people focus on their Circle of Concern® vs. their Circle of Influence®? What attitudes and behaviors come from focusing on things we really can't influence? How does a reactive focus impact our relationships and results?
6. How can you help your colleagues understand the importance of proactive behavior and position the 7 Habits as a key tool in helping them achieve a collective proactive mindset?





## Habit 2: Begin With the End in Mind®

1. Why is mental creation so important for effectiveness in the workplace? What are some of the costs of not taking time to mentally create desired outcomes before beginning to act?
2. What are some of the reasons people take action without thinking and planning first?
3. What's an example of a time you consciously made a key decision based on your deepest values? How did it work out?
4. Some employees cynically see their organization's mission statement as just a "plaque on the wall." How can you help your colleagues see the value of increasing the acceptance and legitimacy of the organization's values and mission?
5. What does Covey mean by "the thick of thin things"? How can an internalized sense of mission help people avoid this trap?
6. Why is a "principle center" necessary for sustained happiness and effectiveness? What's the danger of any other center?

# Habit 3: Put First Things First®

1. Covey says his maxim of personal effectiveness is “Manage from the left, lead from the right.” How can you help colleagues understand the difference and what this means for their organization?
2. Why is the term “time management” a misnomer? What’s the real secret of effectiveness in managing our time? Why is this so difficult?
3. Quadrant 3 is often called the quadrant of deception. Why? What’s deceptive about things that are urgent but not important? Why is it important for everyone to understand this? How can you help others see the value of minimizing this quadrant?
4. What does it take to say no to Quadrant 3? How can you help others to do this while maintaining and building strong relationships?
5. The Time Matrix® can be misinterpreted as implying that all urgency is bad. What are some of the benefits of having a sense of urgency? What are some of the negatives of too much urgency?
6. How can clarity on roles — not just titles — help colleagues increase productivity?
7. How can clarity on roles in your life help you achieve and maintain life balance? What’s one of your personal roles that you feel you are doing very well? What’s a personal role in which you’d like to have greater integrity? Why?
8. What is the power of a Quadrant 2 paradigm? How can weekly planning help reinforce and actualize this paradigm? What’s the payoff of a Quadrant 2 paradigm for others?



## Habit 4: Think Win-Win®

1. What's an example of an Emotional Bank Account (EBA) deposit that a colleague or client has made with you? How did it impact or reinforce your relationship? What's an example of a deposit you made that had a significantly positive outcome?
2. What are examples of how these concepts help strengthen relationships — internally and with clients? How does this benefit their bottom line?
3. Keeping commitments is a major Emotional Bank Account component. How does this connect to what we learned in Habit 3?
4. Why is “win-win or no deal” the highest expression of Habit 4? Why does this require courage *and* consideration? Can you think of a situation where you've demonstrated this? What was the outcome?
5. What are some of the benefits of creating formal or informal Win-Win Agreements? How do they help people move from independence to interdependence? What's an area of your life in which a Win-Win Agreement would improve communication and accountability?





# Habit 5: Seek First to Understand, Then to Be Understood®

1. How does Covey define Empathic Listening? How is it different from “attentive” or “sympathetic” listening?
2. Why is Empathic Listening such a powerful deposit in the EBA? What are the withdrawals of not listening, or listening with the intent to influence?
3. Was there a time when you felt someone hadn’t really listened to you, yet was trying to influence you? What was the outcome? How can you get colleagues to understand the impact of poor communication on their organization?
4. “Autobiographical” listening is filtering what others say through our own paradigms, experiences, and judgments, rather than truly seeking to understand. How can listening autobiographically to a colleague hurt the relationship and opportunities for collaboration? How can listening empathically build the relationship and help uncover needs? What can you do to remind yourself to really listen in such situations?
5. What percentage of the problems you deal with at work is at least partly caused by poor communication? How can you help colleagues see what poor communication is doing to the business, and how this concept can help?

## Habit 6: Synergize<sup>®</sup>

1. When have you been part of a synergistic team — either at work or outside work — in which differences were valued and the team performed at a high level? What lessons can be learned from that experience?
2. What are the biggest barriers to cooperation and teamwork you've encountered? How were they overcome? If they weren't, why not?
3. What do you hear from colleagues about the obstacles to cooperation and teamwork they experience? How can you help them see the benefits of valuing differences to create cohesive teams focused on a common goal?
4. How can you position this concept so colleagues see the tangible benefits of applying it to create dynamic, innovative teamwork?

# Habit 7: Sharpen the Saw®

1. What are some areas in which you're doing well at sharpening the saw? What are some areas in which you want to improve? Why? What would be the payoff?
2. How does keeping your saw sharp equate to improved performance in your job in all four areas?
3. Why would an organization invest in helping its employees maintain habits of renewal? How do those investments affect the bottom line? How can the 7 Habits be used as a tool to help them achieve this?
4. Covey says when a person consistently sharpens the saw, they are by necessity doing all six of the previous habits. Why? Please share an example.







30<sup>TH</sup> ANNIVERSARY

Stephen R. Covey’s book *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People* has empowered and inspired readers for 30 years. It continues to be a bestseller for the simple reason that it ignores trends and pop psychology and focuses on timeless principles of empathy, collaboration, self-management, problem solving, and communication.

Your organization’s success depends on strong individual performance.

No matter how competent your people are, they won’t generate sustained and lasting results unless they’re able to effectively lead themselves; influence, engage, and collaborate with others; and continually improve and renew their capabilities.

Renowned as the world’s premier personal leadership development solution, *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People*® aligns enduring principles of effectiveness with today’s technology and practices. By making these principles part of your organization’s shared culture, you can propel all of your employees toward their very best performance.

To get started, email us at [info@franklincovey.com](mailto:info@franklincovey.com), or visit [franklincovey.com](http://franklincovey.com).

Or call us at:

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