

*I don't simply read books. I devour them, with pen in my hand, highlighting and making notes. After reading, I copy down all the notes and type them up, considering each idea all over again. Yet, I have often found that key learnings are too quickly gone from memory. That's why I started compiling these two-page book reviews for personal use. With the encouragement of friends and colleagues, I offer my notes now through the Creative Option C website so that others may gain the insight of these authors and perhaps be inspired to read the entire work.*

<b>TITLE:</b>	<u>The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People: Restoring the Character Ethic</u>
<b>AUTHOR:</b>	Stephen R. Covey (Chairman of Covey Leadership Center and non-profit Center for Principle-Centered Leadership)
<b>PUBLICATION:</b>	Simon and Schuster, 1989

**PRIMARY THEME:** Personal and organizational effectiveness requires not just productivity, but a balance between productivity and productive capacity. Effective people and organizations use the seven habits to develop and take care of their productive capacity, which includes among other things, a personal commitment to the Character Ethic and living according to timeless principles such as integrity, dignity, quality, excellence, empathy, and more.

**SUMMARY DISCUSSION:** This book is chock-full of spirit-opening ideas that call each individual to strive to improve, while simultaneously providing practical advice for getting the most out of the hours of our days and years. Covey defines a habit as the intersection of our skills, knowledge, and desires and suggests that changing deeply ingrained patterns of behavior takes more than willpower. By committing ourselves to knowing and building our own character, we can, over time, achieve the personal and public victories known as "success" and can even rebuild self-esteem. Further, as we seek to function successfully in an interdependent society, we will realize increased desire on the part of others to cooperate with us by understanding each individual, attending to little things, keeping commitments, clarifying expectations, showing personal integrity, and apologizing sincerely when we are wrong. The seven habits help us to master ourselves and then master leadership. This is not a how-to book of techniques for making calendars or crafting the perfect to-do list. Rather, it is a book conveying the idea that good people can achieve good results, and that people who wish to be good should take care of who they are and not just to what they do.

### CHAPTERS:

*Part One: Paradigms and Principles.*

- *Inside-Out.* Each of us is shaped by the unique circumstances of our lives, and each of us inhabits a world filled with people who have different perceptions and ways of being. As each individual seeks to shape the world around him/her, the beginning place is always internal and can be grown with firm reliance on the timeless and universal principles adhered to by people of good character.

*Part Two: Private Victory.*

- *Habit 1: Be Proactive: Principles of Personal Vision.* Individuals can choose to enlarge their Circle of Influence – which most importantly always contains the self - by focusing positive energy on the outcome they wish to produce, and by choosing to embody the change or the results they seek.
- *Habit 2: Begin with the End in Mind: Principles of Personal Leadership.* We will all die. Effectiveness requires that we organize our lives according to what we would want others to write into our obituary and

remember about us when we are gone. More mundanely, each individual's knowledge of their core purpose and goals should guide his or her choices on an annual, monthly, weekly, and daily basis.

- *Habit 3: Put First Things First: Principles of Personal Management.* Here Covey outlines the Time Management Matrix in which he identifies the difference between important and unimportant tasks, and also the difference between urgent and not urgent tasks. He then suggests that effectiveness requires a shift toward Quadrant II – tasks that are important but not urgent: prevention, relationship building, planning, and other work directly related to our unique values and to our personal or organizational goals.

#### *Part Three: Public Victory (Paradigms of Interdependence)*

- *Habit 4: Think Win/Win: Principles of Interpersonal Leadership.* Strong characters seek a life of connection to others, with deep empathy for the uniqueness of each person's experience and value. When one engages the world from a posture of wanting what is best for every individual, and is endowed with integrity, maturity, and a belief in abundance, the effectiveness of one's own life is enhanced.
- *Habit 5: Seek First to Understand, Then to be Understood: Principles of Empathic Communication.* Empathic listening is the backbone of successful interdependent living. Unless and until we genuinely listen as others speak, we cannot understand their perspective and cannot be a part of creating mutual gain. Similarly, without understanding others, we cannot hope to make our points more clearly or to motivate others to support our goals.
- *Habit 6: Synergize: Principles of Creative Cooperation.* The whole is greater than the sum of its parts. When groups of people put their minds together in a genuine spirit of collaboration and cooperation, outcomes can be greater than any one individual could devise or even imagine. Techniques for this can be taught and applied, but are not a substitute for the organic kind of synergy that emerges naturally when individuals are genuinely committed not just to the outcome but also to each other.

#### *Part Four: Renewal*

- *Habit 7: Sharpen the Saw: Principles of Balanced Self-Renewal.* The "sharpen the saw" metaphor refers to the improvement in production capacity a lumberjack might make by taking time away from sawing to take care of his tools. Effective individuals and groups develop the habit of regularly taking time to renew the four dimensions of our humanity: physical, spiritual, mental and social/emotional.

**TOOLS:** Covey ends the chapter on each of the seven habits with "Application Suggestions" in which he provides ideas for exercises, such as "Identify three key relationships in your life. Give some indication of what you feel the balance is in the Emotional Bank Accounts. Write down some specific ways you could make deposits in each account." In addition, the book contains templates for planning calendars and tips for using the Franklin Covey planners that are widely available. Finally, the author includes pictorial representations of some of his major themes, for example, how the habits relate to one another.

**KEY TAKEAWAYS:** *"If I try to use human influence strategies and tactics of how to get other people to do what I want, to work better, to be more motivated, to like me and each other – while my character is fundamentally flawed, marked by duplicity and insincerity – then, in the long run, I cannot be successful. My duplicity will breed distrust, and everything I do – even using so called good human relations techniques – will be perceived as manipulative. It simply makes no difference how good the rhetoric is or even how good the intentions are; if there is little or no trust, there is no foundation for permanent success. Only basic goodness gives life to technique." (21)*

*"Peace of mind comes when your life is in harmony with true principles and values and in no other way. There is also the intrinsic security that comes as a result of effective interdependent living. There is security in knowing that effective Win/Win solutions do exist, that life is not always "either/or," that there are almost always mutually beneficial Third Alternatives. There is security in knowing that you can step out of your own frame of reference without giving it up, that you can really, deeply understand another human being. There is security that comes when you authentically, creatively and cooperatively interact with other people and really experience these interdependent habits." (298)*