

COVEY's SEVEN HABITS (1)

By **Hayan Hamzeh**

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Introduction:

Dr. Stephen R. Covey gives, throughout his book: “*The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People*”, powerful lessons for personal change by presenting the seven-habits-method and advocating his ideas with so many examples and success stories. Aristotle says: “*We are what we repeatedly do. Excellence, then, is not an act, but a habit*”(2). Confirming this, Dr. Covey considers that effective habits are based on knowledge, skills, and desire. His seven habits are the following:

- 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.

The Author divides the seven habits into three stages. The first stage includes the first, second, and third habits, moving from ‘*Dependence*’ to ‘*Independence*’ and achieving the ‘*Private Victory*’. The second stage includes the fourth, fifth, and the sixth habits moving forward from ‘*Independence*’ to ‘*Interdependence*’ and achieving the ‘*Public Victory*’. Finally, the third stage is the seventh habit itself that renews all the habits. Below is a brief summary of Dr. Covey’s seven habits:

(1)- S. R. COVEY, “*The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People*”, FREE PRESS, New York, 1989.

(2). IBID, P (46).

The First Habit: BE PROACTIVE

To be proactive means to be creative and brave enough to be actively and efficiently **responsible** for your life and future. It means that what we do is based on our **responsible** decisions, and not subject to our circumstances and conditions.

Dr. Covey sees that an individual can be proactive by using his/her positive energy to enlarge his/her ‘circle of influence’ and reduce the ‘circle of concern’. He says: “*Make small commitments and keep them. Be a light, not a judge. Be a model, not a critic. **Be part of the solution, not part of the problem***” (3).

The Second Habit: BEGIN WITH THE END IN MIND

This habit is centered on principles, and the author invites each person to write and use his/her personal ‘**mission statement**’, and to identify his/her **roles and goals**. He sees that the internal personal strength comes from the principle-centered behaviour and attitude, which are only limited by the natural consequences of the principles themselves.

The Third Habit: PUT FIRST THINGS FIRST

This habit is the real accomplishment of habits one and two, and the last step to ‘*Independence*’. It is based on the proactive and correct principles-centered personality. The author divides human actions (as per his time management matrix) (4) into four quadrants:

1). Important & Urgent; 2). Important & Not Urgent; 3). Urgent & Not Important; 4). Not Urgent & Not Important. Dr. Covey

(3). IBID, PP (92-93)

(4). IBID, P (151)

advises the reader to focus and be in the quadrant No. 2, to reduce the quadrant No. 1 in order to avoid: stress, burnouts, crisis management, always putting out fires and always tackling urgent issues.

The Fourth Habit: THINK WIN/WIN

The fourth habit is the first step of stage two going towards the 'Public Victory' and 'Interdependence' with concentration on personal **integrity** in order for both parties of any relationship to achieve '**Win/Win**' OR '**no deal**'. It states that the best place to build any relationship is inside ourselves and which falls inside the 'circle of influence'.

The Fifth Habit: SEEK FIRST TO UNDERSTAND, THEN TO BE UNDERSTOOD

It is about how an individual can **understand** the 'other' by **listening empathically** and looking through the other's glasses. Furthermore, it is highly important for both parties of a relationship to **be understood**. Dr. Covey's four advice here are: *Don't evaluate; Don't probe; Don't advice; Don't interpret.*

The Sixth Habit: SYNERGIZE

This habit builds the essence of creative cooperation, and it is the core of principle-centered leadership. The outcome of working together as a creative team is much higher and greater than working as individuals.

The Seventh Habit: SHARPEN THE SAW

This habit is concerned with the principles of balanced self-renewal: '*Physically*' (by exercises, nutrition, stress management); '*Mentally*' (by reading, visualizing, planning,

writing); ‘*Spiritually*’ (by value clarification, commitment, study, meditation); and ‘*Socially/Emotionally*’ (by serving the society, empathy, synergy, intrinsic security). This habit protects and renews all the seven habits, it is the platform, framework, and the motivation that hold them together strongly and efficiently.

Personal Opinion:

The book is **very important and valuable**. I encourage every one to read it deliberately and benefit from its great ideas by following the seven habits centering on the **principles of humanity**. The book is a first-step guide for individuals to be personal leaders and community leaders.

However, and on the other hand, Dr. Covey, in the pages (104 and 105) gave an example of the second habit, he described the scripts, attitudes, and the real nationalistic feelings of Arab peoples in the sixties and the seventies of being very foolish. This is very important for the Middle Eastern countries to review their strategic choices so they can understand the meaning of cooperation and collaboration away from emotional theories and move forward with more scientific approach towards future and the 3rd millennium. Why don’t they re-script their texts and scripts and change their way of thinking – as the great Arab and Islamic civilization in the past did? Why don’t they center themselves on values and principles of humanity and democratic style of management instead of fear and negativity.

There is a lot of creativity in the Arab world on the individual level, while there is no strategy on the states’ level. The upcoming challenges in the region and the reactions – regionally and internationally – will determine the future and prosperity of our coming generations.