

# Seven Habits Revisited by Stephen Covey

I see seven unique human endowments or capabilities associated with The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People. One way to revisit The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People is to identify the unique human capability or endowment associated with each habit.

The primary human endowments are 1) self-awareness or self-knowledge; 2) imagination and conscience; and 3) volition or will power. And the secondary endowments are 4) an abundance mentality; 5) courage and consideration; and 6) creativity. The seventh endowment is self-renewal. These are all unique human endowments; animals don't possess any of them. But, they are all on a continuum of low to high levels.

## **Associated with Habit 1:**

**Be Proactive** is the endowment of self-knowledge or self-awareness, an ability to choose your response (response-ability). At the low end of the continuum are the ineffective people who transfer responsibility by blaming themselves or others or their environment anything or anybody "out there" so that they are not responsible for results. At the upper end of the continuum toward increasing effectiveness is self-awareness: "I know my tendencies; I know the scripts or programs that are in me; but I am not those scripts. I can rewrite my scripts." You are aware that you are the creative force of your life. You are not the victim of conditions or conditioning. You can choose your response to any situation, to any person. So on the continuum; you go from being a victim to self-determining creative power through self-awareness of the power to choose your response to any condition or conditioning.

## **Associated with Habit 2:**

**Begin With the End In Mind** is the endowment of imagination and conscience. If you are the programmer, write the program. Decide what you're going to do with the time, talent, and tools you have to work with: "Within my small circle of influence, I'm going to decide." At the low end of the continuum is the sense of futility about goals, purposes, and improvement efforts. After all, if you are totally a victim, if you are a product of what has happened to you, then what can you realistically do about anything? So you wander through life hoping things will turn out well, that the environment may be positive, so you can have your daily bread and maybe some positive fruits. At the other end is a sense of hope and purpose: "I have created the future in my mind. I can see it, and I can imagine what it will be like." Only people have the capability to imagine a new course of action and pursue it conscientiously.

## **Associated with Habit 3:**

**Put First Things First** is the endowment of willpower. At the low end of the continuum is the ineffective, flaky life of floating and coasting, avoiding responsibility and taking the easy way out, exercising little initiative or willpower. And at the top end is a highly disciplined life that focuses heavily on the highly important but not necessarily urgent activities of life. It's a life of leverage and influence. On the continuum, you go from being driven by crises and having can't and won't power to being focused on the important but not necessarily urgent matters of your life and having the will power to realize them.

The exercise of primary human endowments empowers you to use the secondary endowments more effectively. We will now move from Primary to Secondary Endowments.

## **Associated with Habit 4:**

**Think Win-Win** is the endowment of an abundance mentality. Why? Because your security comes from principles. Everything is seen through principles. When your wife makes a mistake, you're not accusatory. Why? Your security does not come from your wife living up to your expectations. Your security comes from within yourself. You're principle-centered. As people become increasingly principle-centered, they love to share recognition and power. Why? It's not a limited pie. It's an ever-enlarging pie. The basic paradigm and assumption about limited resources is flawed. The great capabilities of people are hardly even tapped. The abundance mentality produces more profit, power, and recognition for everybody. On the continuum, you go from a scarcity to an abundance mentality through feelings of intrinsic self-worth and a benevolent desire for mutual benefit.

### **Associated with Habit 5:**

**Seek First to Understand, Then to Be Understood** is the endowment of courage balanced with consideration. Does it take courage and consideration to not be understood first? Think about it. Think about the problems you face. You tend to think, "You need to understand me, but you don't understand. I understand you, but you don't understand me. So let me tell you my story first, and then you can say what you want." And the other person says, "Okay, I'll try to understand." But the whole time they're "listening," they're preparing their reply. They are just pretending to listen, selective listening. When you show your home movies or tell some chapter of your autobiography "let me tell you my experience" the other person is tuned out unless he feels understood.

But what happens when you truly listen to another person? The whole relationship is transformed: "Someone started listening to me and they seemed to savor my words. They didn't agree or disagree, they just were listening and I felt as if they were seeing how I saw the world. And in that process, I found myself listening to myself. I started to feel a worth in myself."

The root cause of almost all people problems is the basic communication problem people do not listen with empathy. They listen from within their autobiography. They lack the skill and attitude of empathy. They need approval; they lack courage. The ability to listen first requires restraint, respect, and reverence. And the ability to make yourself understood requires courage and consideration. On the continuum, you go from fight and flight instincts to mature two-way communication where courage is balanced with consideration.

### **Associated with Habit 6:**

**Synergize** is the endowment of creativity, the creation of something. How? By yourself? No, through two respectful minds communicating, producing solutions that are far better than what either originally proposed. Most negotiation is positional bargaining and results, at best, in compromise. But when you get into synergistic communication, you leave position. You understand basic underlying needs and interests and find solutions to satisfy them both. You get people thinking. And if you get the spirit of teamwork, you start to build a very powerful bond, an emotional bank account, and people are willing to subordinate their immediate wants for long-term relationships. With courage and consideration, communicate openly with each other and try to create win-win solutions. On the continuum, you go from defensive communication to compromise transactions to synergistic and creative alternatives and transformations.

### **Associated with Habit 7:**

**Sharpen the Saw** is the unique endowment of continuous improvement or self-renewal to overcome entropy. If you don't constantly improve and renew yourself, you'll fall into entropy, closed systems and styles. At one end of the continuum is entropy (everything breaks down), and the other end is continuous improvement, innovation, and refinement. On the continuum, you go from a condition of entropy to a condition of continuous renewal, improvement, innovation, and refinement.

My hope in revisiting the Seven Habits is that you will use the seven unique human endowments associated with them to bless and benefit the lives of many other people.