

# Overview of the 7 Habits

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Today I'll provide an overview of Stephen Covey's book, "The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People". I'll also explain the two **overarching principles** that he believes are the foundation for practicing these 7 habits.

Stephen Covey dedicated his life to demonstrating how people can gain more control over their own destiny. He published the "7 Habits" in 1989, and it's now sold millions of copies in nearly 40 languages. That alone means that it's very possible that some of you have already read this book! Which is fine, because there's a lot to learn it. So, let's get started!

## First of all, what is a habit?

Aristotle wrote, "*We are what we repeatedly do. Excellence, then, is not an act, but a habit.*" A habit is something that we do over and over until it becomes automatic. This book is about developing positive habits of attitude and behavior.

Covey broke his habits into three categories—what he called private victories and public victories as well as renewal.

Habits 1-3 are what Covey called the **private victories**. They are intended to take you from dependence to independence and self-reliance. Covey believed that you need to master private habits before you can start on more public ones.

Habits 4-6 are called the **public victories**. They are intended to lead to you toward interdependence with others- the ability to align your own needs and desires with those of other people in order to create effective relationships and teams.

Habit 7 is about **renewal**. It's about learning to take better care of yourself.

## So, here's a list of the 7 habits:

**Habit 1: Being Proactive.** Taking control of your life.

**Habit 2. Beginning with the End in Mind.** Knowing what you want to accomplish in life.

**Habit 3. Putting First Things First.** Organizing and executing your work around your priorities.

**Habit 4. Thinking Win/Win.** Seeking out agreements that are mutually beneficial.

**Habit 5. Seeking First to Understand, Then to be Understood.** Listening with empathy.

**Habit 6. (Learning to) Synergize.** Cooperating well with others.

**Habit 7. Sharpening the Saw.** Taking the time to renew your energy, mind, spirit and body. Before we study each of these habits, I want to review with you the two principles that Covey says frame all of the 7 habits. Those two principles are what he calls:

1. The Emotional Bank Account and
2. The Production/Production Capability (P/PC) Balance

With the **Emotional Bank Account**, Covey is comparing how we manage our relationships with a bank account. As with a bank account, we make deposits (a positive) or take withdrawals (a negative).

The deposits come from behaviors and courtesies that increase another person's trust - like showing understanding and empathy; listening to another person; remembering what's important to another; doing favors and keeping commitments; apologizing when we do something wrong; offering a sincere compliment.

The withdrawals come from doing things that decrease another person's trust in us – like forgetting an appointment with them; hurting them with our words or actions; embarrassing them; disappointing them; or showing disrespect in some way.

Covey reminds us to be sure we have a positive balance in our Emotional Bank Account with others.

The second principle is the **P/ PC Balance**. This refers to the balance between Production (what you are trying to accomplish or get done) and Production Capability. Production Capability can include any of the assets or resources you need to get a job done- and they almost always include human resources.

The principle Covey reminds us of here is to keep these two things in balance- in other words, don't abuse, burn out, or use up your PC or Production Capability (remember, this is usually workers or people) just in order to produce the outcome you're after.

Here's an example he gives:

Imagine a woman in a factory who's in charge of a particular machine. There's pressure on her to increase production, and she wants to make a good impression—so she decides to run the machine 24 hours a day and postpone maintenance. What is the short term result? Yes! Increased output, costs down, profits up. She's seen in the short term as an outstanding employee—maybe she even gets a promotion!

However, the increased production comes at the expense of the production capability. The machine quickly wears out parts and breaks down. And, of course, production stops and the costs increase again because of the expense of fixing the broken machine.

This lesson applies to people, too—our most important assets! If you burn out or over-use the people you need to get the job done, they will let you down over time by quitting, getting sick a lot, or making critical mistakes. In addition to the long-term losses, it's just plain not ethical to use and abuse workers.

Thank you for listening to this opening lecture on the two overarching principles that frame the 7 Habits we'll be discussing next- the Emotional Bank Account (the deposits and withdrawals we make with other people) and the P/PC Balance that describes how important it is to take proper care of our assets, whether people or machines.

Before moving on to the next assignment, please consider these questions:

1. How healthy is your emotional bank balance with the important people in your life? Do you show kindness and consideration toward others? Do you keep promises and honor commitments?
2. How might you help an organization or a company assure that its workers are not exploited in order to achieve its goals? How might an organization address the concerns and needs of its workers? How can it support a healthy work/life balance for its employees?