

The Seven Habits of Highly Successful NSDA Leaders

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Content based on *The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People* by Dr. Stephen Covey

I. Definitions:

- A. *Habit* (noun): an acquired behavior pattern regularly followed until it has become almost involuntary (e.g., the habit of looking both ways before crossing the street)
- B. *Successful* (adjective): accomplishing an aim or purpose

II. Disclaimers:

- A. There is no “cookbook.”
- B. The same desired behaviors may be associated with more than one habit.
- C. It will be the responsibility of support group leaders, via breakout groups, to determine specifically how to apply the seven habits to their work.

III. Paradigm shift:

- A. From outside-in to inside-out.
- B. From a personality ethos or tactical ethos to a character ethos, emphasizing such factors as integrity, courage, and justice.
- C. From determinism to free will and personal responsibility.
- D. From dependence to independence (self-mastery) and interdependence (working together).
- E. From what we say to what we do.
 - 1. Aristotle: “We are what we repeatedly do. Excellence, then, is not an act but a habit.”
 - 2. Ralph Waldo Emerson: “What you are shouts so loudly in my ears I cannot hear what you say.”

F. From doing things right to making sure first to do the right thing. (Video)

IV. Categories of the Seven Habits

A. Those involving the achievement of independence:

1. Be proactive.
2. Begin with the end in mind.
3. First things first.

B. Those involving the achievement of interdependence:

1. Win/win
2. Seek first to understand, then to be understood.
3. Synergy

C. That which involves continuous improvement and which serves the preceding six habits:

1. Sharpen the saw.

V. Be proactive

- A. Carry an umbrella on a rainy day but do much more than that (while also being grateful for the rain if you're from California).
- B. Tendencies are only tendencies.
- C. Devote effort to controlling that which one can control, which is largely limited to (most) of your own behaviors. (Reinhold Niebuhr: "God, grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change, the courage to change the things I can, and the wisdom to know the difference.")
(Concentric circle diagram)
- D. Play well the hand that was dealt rather than complaining about the dealer.
- E. Believe in oneself (Henry Ford: "Whether you think that you can or that you can't, you are usually right.")
- F. Commit. (Yoda in "The Empire Strikes Back": "Do, or do not. There is no 'try'.")

- G. Raise self-esteem by achieving incrementally more challenging goals; positive feelings/emotions more often are the result of behaviors rather than the cause of them. (Climb out of the crevasse)
- H. Positive feelings/behaviors more often are the *result* of behaviors, rather than a *cause* of them.
- I. But, what one says (to oneself as well as to others) to a great extent also determines how one feels and what one will do.
- J. Choose responses carefully rather than reflexively.
- K. Make things happen; don't be a passive victim.
- L. Do not surrender control; one has more control than one might believe. (Gandhi: "They cannot take away our self-respect unless we give it to them.")
- M. Be "how can," not "why can't"; emphasize finding opportunities, not problems. (Robert L. LaSala: "Give me one reason why it could be done.")
- N. Avoid such statements as: "That's just the way I am." "He makes me so mad." "I have no choice. I have to do it."

VI. Begin with the end in mind.

A. Choose an end consistent with high principles.

B. Possible exercises:

1. Write desired obituary.
2. Write a personal mission statement: desired impact on self (mental and physical), family, friends, profession, and spiritual life.

C. Lewis Carroll from *Alice in Wonderland*:

Alice: "Would you tell me, please, which way I ought to go from here?"

Cat: "That depends a good deal on where you want to get to."

Alice: "I don't much care where –"

Cat: "Then it doesn't matter which way you go."

D. Bottom line: one needs self-direction to succeed.

VII. First things first.

A. There is no such thing as *time management*; there is only *self-management*.

B. There is no way to "do it all."

- C. Key tasks are to decide what not to do and to learn to say “No.”
- D. Too easy to become seduced by the urgent unimportant; “Your poor planning is not my emergency.”
- E. Do urgent, important things first, then the non-urgent, important. (See Covey matrix)
- F. The most important tasks rarely are the easiest.
- G. Use Premack reinforcers to deal with procrastination.
- H. Do important big tasks first (both urgent and non-urgent), and the important little tasks will fit among the big ones. (Image of big rocks and sand)

VIII. Win/win

- A. Everyone can win.
- B. Win/win or no deal.
- C. Not zero-sum, not competitive.
- D. Abundance model, not scarcity model.
- E. Works best when all parties have appropriately high self-worth, a personal sense of security, maturity, and integrity,
- F. Outcomes that hurt one party hurt all parties.
- G. Hurt parties ensure unstable outcomes (c.f., post-WW I Germany).
- H. Interest-based, not position-based (union overtime example).
- I. Requires teamwork where teamwork is caring as much about the success of others as one’s own success.
- J. Teamwork requires trust. (Camillo Benso di Cavour “The man who trusts men will make fewer mistakes than he who distrusts them.”)
- K. Trust engenders receiving the benefit of the doubt and the forgiveness of mistakes.

IX. Seek first to understand, then to be understood.

- A. Arguably the most important of the seven habits.
- B. Key is active empathic listening.
- C. Being active:
 1. Is hard work.
 2. Requires effort to observe and listen carefully.
 3. Not a passive process (totally unlike making an audio recording).
 4. One needs to interpret—and interpret correctly.

5. Correct interpretation requires guarding against making faulty assumptions and inferences. (Listening exercise)
6. Suspending judgment. (Abraham Lincoln: "If you were born where they were born and you were taught what they were taught, you'd believe what they believe." Herman J. Guckenberger: "There is so much in the lives of all of us that we don't know that justifies tolerance and forgiveness.")
7. Paraphrase to confirm understanding of thoughts and feelings.
8. Focus is 100% on speaker, making appropriate eye contact—no multi-tasking.

D. Being empathic:

1. Tuning-in to both factual and emotional content.
2. Best when one uses one's eyes and heart, in addition to one's ears.
3. Caring and communicating the caring. (T. R. Roosevelt: "No one cares how much you know, until they know how much you care.")

E. Listening:

1. Much more than waiting for one's turn to talk.
2. Requires hearing accurately what is said and noticing what is not said.
3. Have no agenda other than to understand.
4. Allow silences.
5. Avoid trying to solve the problem.
6. Avoid saying: "I know exactly how you feel."

F. Additional comments about listening:

1. Don't underestimate the power of listening.
2. Being able to express one's feelings diminishes bad feelings and amplifies good ones.
3. Often enables the speaker to solve his/her own problems.
4. Critical to building and maintaining relationships. (Maya Angelou: "I've learned that people will forget what you said, people will forget what you did, but people will never forget how you made them feel.")

- X. Synergize.
 - A. Unleash the power of the group.
 - B. Value cognitive, experiential, and psychological differences. (Gen. George Patton: "If everyone is thinking the same, someone isn't thinking.")
 - C. Often best when the entire group is together.
 - D. Brainstorm with the "leader" taking care to hold back.
 - E. Possible to disagree and both be right. (Ambiguous image sequence)

- XI. Sharpen the saw
 - A. Need lifelong learning; none of us should be a finished product.
 - B. Provides increasing mastery of other six habits.
 - C. Enhances knowledge, skills, abilities, and motivation.
 - D. Entails renewal: physical, mental, social/emotional, and spiritual.
 - E. Balance doing and learning, production with ability to produce. (S. Covey: "Learn. Commit. Do.")
 - F. Requires the ability to delay gratification. (Goose that laid golden eggs)
 - G. Combination of preventive maintenance and continuous improvement.
 - H. Not having enough time is an illusion (or maybe a delusion).

- XII. Breakout group task: How can you apply these seven habits to your work as a support group leader?