



DAILY REFLECTIONS FOR HIGHLY EFFECTIVE PEOPLE

LIVING THE 7 HABITS OF
HIGHLY EFFECTIVE PEOPLE EVERY DAY

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FRANKLIN COVEY CO.

Daily Reflections for

HIGHLY
EFFECTIVE
PEOPLE

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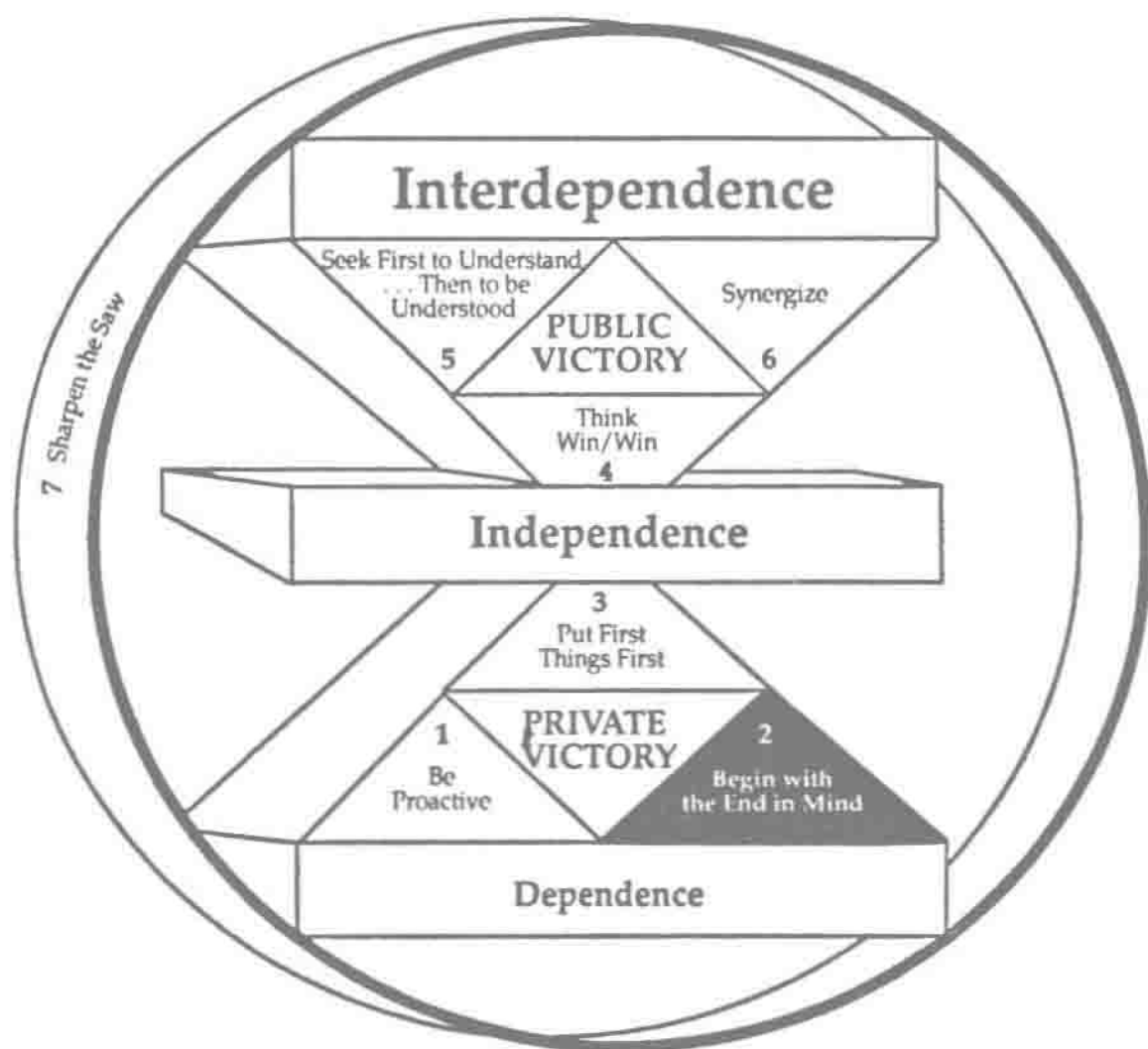
The purpose of this *Reflections* book is to help you become strong in the hard moments. In every day are found a few hard moments, which if we are strong in, make everything else like “a piece of cake.” But if we are weak in those moments—if we cave in to the temptation of taking the lower road—then we will find ourselves caving in on many things. As Shakespeare said:

*There is a tide in the affairs of men,
Which taken at the flood, leads on to fortune;
Omitted, all the voyage of their life
Is bound in shallows and in miseries.
On such a full sea are we now afloat,
And we must take the current when it serves,
Or lose our ventures.*

*The Tragedy of Julius Caesar,
Act 4, Scene 3, Lines 218–224*

There are hard moments in each of the 7 Habits. Let me briefly share what some of them might be:

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Seven Habits Maturity Continuum

Many of the hard moments of *Habit 1*, “*Be Proactive*,” involve subordinating a mood, temporary feeling, or circumstance to a principle or guideline you value. As I related in the *7 Habits* book, one of

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the most profound, truly inspirational experiences of my life took place in the fall of 1969 when I was on a sabbatical leave in Hawaii to write a book. I was rummaging around the stacks in the library on a campus I had an office in. I pulled down a book which, foolishly, I never recorded. But I remember what it said as distinctly today as the first time I read it. It literally staggered me. I read it again and again that day, and returned several days in a row to reflect on it.

It said essentially this: “Between stimulus and response is a space. In this space lies our freedom to choose our response. In these choices lie our growth and our happiness.”

In the most fundamental sense, Habit 1 is the awareness of this space between stimulus and response—between what has happened to us and our response to it. Next to life itself, this self-awareness and our freedom to choose, to direct our lives, is our most precious gift and power.

The hard moment or test of Habit 1 is to be

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aware of and to choose to live your own life. It is seeing yourself as the programmer, not as a program being acted out. Regardless of the social and psychic scars you may carry inside, regardless of how others treat you, regardless of the disappointments and strains and setbacks which may blindside your finest intentions, you see the space between all of that and your freedom and power to respond to it.

Habit 2, "Begin with the End in Mind," is the habit of vision, of purpose, of mission. It is a sense of what your life is about and how you want to live it. It includes the principles and guidelines you want to live by. It's also not just your values, for values without vision are insufficient. Yes, we all want to be good, but good for what? We want to be good for something. What is that something? What is that vision—not just for your whole life, but for today, this meeting, this interaction, this hour, this moment?

For many, the test or hard moment for Habit 2

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comes when you are tired and lazy—just going with the flow. Some new project or meeting or day begins and you simply do not do the mental, emotional, and spiritual work inside yourself to get a sense of how you would like it to end up. This doesn't mean you decide *all* the exact details of how you want the meeting or day to end up. But rather, you do decide what you want the *spirit* of that day or meeting and the quality of the relationship to end up like. You feel deeply committed to worthy end results and yet no action has been taken.

Habit 3, "Put First Things First," is the habit of integrity, of discipline, of keeping that commitment. It is the habit that draws upon the independent will to literally act upon those things which we, in Habit 2, determined are first things. The hard moments of Habit 3 come at us constantly. Will we carry forth our resolve? Will we execute? The deeper the resolve, the easier the execution—and vice versa.

For instance, perhaps the most powerful form of

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minority vocal control ever contemplated takes place when a few million taste buds are screaming “Yes, yes!” to something you shouldn’t eat, when at the same time, billions of unvocal cells in the rest of the body are crying out “No, no!” This, frankly, is one of my hardest moments. It usually takes place at the end of the day when I’m on a trip all alone in a hotel room. I’m totally spent and exhausted from speaking all day and then traveling several hundred miles to a new location. I’m relaxed on the bed, talking on the phone to my wife and kids—simply “letting it all hang out.” Before the call home I call room service. I can order anything I want. This is a hard moment. When I fail this hard moment, I live with the consequences of not sleeping as deeply, of putting on unnecessary girth, of not having the same energy the next afternoon. I then also have the feeling that I have betrayed my integrity and stewardship to model what I teach and to champion other people’s growth around the same principles. True minority control!

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What is *your* hardest moment for each of the first three habits? They are usually always different and unique to every person. There is great value in trying to identify them so that you can exercise your unique endowments of self-awareness and independent will to live by your vision and conscience. There is also great value in recognizing the horrendous price we pay, both personally and socially, when we are weak in the hard moments. It's like trading dust for diamonds. Shakespeare beautifully captured the effects of "giving in" to the pleasure of the moment rather than subordinating it to the real joy of contribution and growth:

What win I, if I gain the thing I seek?

A dream, a breath, a froth of fleeting joy.

Who buys a minute's mirth to wail a week?

Or seeks eternity to get a toy?

For one sweet grape, who will the vine destroy?

The Rape of Lucrece,

Lines 211-215

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Perhaps the hardest moment and test of *Habit 4*, “*Think Win-Win*,” is when we are absolutely convinced we are right. We know exactly what should be done, what the decision should be, what we want. It is truly going for win-win when all you really want is your own way—simply winning. Or perhaps it’s going for win-win when another takes you on and opposes you, and you are so stirred up that you want to go for win-lose. You see it as a contest of wills; you don’t want to give in. Or perhaps the hard moment is when you are threatened by the possibility of displeasing someone and you need their acceptance and approval so badly that you want to go for lose-win. You capitulate and give in, rather than combining courage with consideration.

The hard moment of *Habit 5*, “*Seek First to Understand, Then to Be Understood*,” comes when you are crying to be understood. Perhaps you feel completely misunderstood. Everyone else is having

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their say and you are not. Everyone else's feelings and views are being expressed and yours aren't. Besides that, they're off-base and you have a much better idea. You matter, too. They should understand you. You already understand them, but now it's your turn. Besides, understanding them is irrelevant. You know you're right. There's no need to understand that which is wrong—or so you think.

The second hardest moment I face, and the greatest mistakes I make, usually come from violating Habit 5. It's judging before I understand and acting before I really understand either the big picture or another person. Once the collective monologue begins, you start investing more and more of your ego into your convictions and into your own need to be understood. The other just isn't listening. Oh, what a hard moment that is—to reach deep inside and subordinate your need to be understood and really work to get into the frame of mind and heart of the other. It is listening empath-

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ically and having the discipline and the patience to simply hold your tongue. It's constantly relearning the anatomy lesson that we have two ears and one mouth, and we should use them accordingly. (Only one of the three holes closes.)

The hard moment or test of *Habit 6*, “*Synergize*,” comes when you have a difference with someone and you are tempted to simply compromise. It's taking the course of least resistance by trying to quickly and efficiently find some middle position satisfactory to both, even though you know in your heart it does not optimize the situation. You know there are other unexplored alternatives out there, but there has not yet been enough *Habit 5* to really understand the issue and the underlying needs and concerns of the people involved. In short, the temptation is to satisfy rather than to optimize.

The key is to press on with the spirit of *Habit 4* and the skill of *Habit 5* until the spirit of synergy starts to come into the relationship. Then you are

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both looking in the same direction and searching for a third alternative whereby you not only tolerate and accept differences, but actually celebrate them. You value the differing perceptions, feelings, and experiences immensely, for they enable you to create something far better. Creating a third alternative that is felt by each person to be superior to those originally proposed becomes one of the most bonding experiences in relationships and in life.

Habit 7, "Sharpen the Saw," is essentially the habit that this book represents. It is using our unique gifts and endowments to constantly renew ourselves physically, mentally, and spiritually, and to renew our relationships. In so doing, we counteract entropy—the tendency of all things to eventually break down. One of the most effective ways to renew is through daily reflection and meditation. In both one's heart and mind, the renewal spirit is stirred. The resolve to live by values based on principles is renewed and deepened. Our batteries are

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recharged. The saw becomes sharper. Your life becomes sharper. You are able to do your work better, faster, wiser. You are better able to love unconditionally, to take initiative, to be both courageous and compassionate simultaneously. You're able to sidestep negative energy rather than give away your "space" to those people or things that seem to control or victimize you. When you don't sidestep, you literally give up your freedom to choose your response. You disempower yourself and empower others' weaknesses to continue to mess up your life. You are not living; you are "being lived."

Habit 7 has many hard moments. For me, the hardest is to simply get up at 5:30 A.M. and climb aboard that stationary bike and start reading when I don't want to—when I'm longing to get back between the sheets, and the siren call of the mattress is ever so seductive. I've also found that the key to my being strong in this hard moment of climbing on that bike is being strong in the hard mo-

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ment the night before of going to bed at a decent hour.

My next hard moment is paying the price early in the day to develop a frame of mind and heart that's in total alignment with the vision and principles of my personal mission statement—to truly “win” a private victory. I've found that books like *Reflections* can powerfully serve to create that mind and heart. Reflecting is like “priming the pump.” The familiar saying goes, “As a man thinketh in his heart, so is he.” It takes conscious effort to ponder and meditate—to slow down the rush and the urgency addiction long enough to get perspective and ask, “What's it all about, Alfie?” Putting thoughts from the mind into the heart is the essence of meditation and reflection.

Plato said, “The unexamined life is not worth living,” yet keeping a journal so as to observe one's own involvement in life, distilling one's learnings, experiences, feelings, and insights, is a hard moment for many. Turning off the mindless TV view-