

***The 7 Habits of Highly Effective Teens* | Get in the Habit THEY MAKE YOU OR BREAK YOU**

Welcome! My name is Sean Covey and I wrote this book. I don't know how you got it. Maybe your mom gave it to you to shape you up. Or maybe you bought it with your own money because the title caught your eye. Regardless of how it landed in your hands, I'm really glad it did. Now you just need to read it.

We first make our habits, then our habits make us.

A lot of teens read books, but I wasn't one of them. (I did read several book summaries, however.) So if you're like I was, you may be ready to shelve this book. But before you do that, hear me out. If you promise to read on, I'll promise to make it an adventure. In fact, to keep it fun, I've stuffed it with cartoons, clever ideas, great quotes, and powerful stories about real teens from all over the world . . . along with a few other surprises. So, with that in mind: will you give it a try?

Okay? Okay!

Let's dive in, then. This book is based on another book that my dad, Stephen R. Covey, wrote several years ago entitled ***The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People***. Surprisingly, that book has become one of the best-selling books of all time. He owes a lot of the credit for its success to me and my brothers and sisters, however. You see, we were his guinea pigs. He tried out all of his psycho experiments on us, and that's why my brothers and sisters have major emotional problems (just kidding, siblings). Luckily, I escaped uninjured.

So why did I write this book? I wrote it because life for teens is no playground. It's a jungle out there. And if I've done my job right, this book can be like a compass to help you navigate through it. Unlike my dad's book, which was written for old people (and can get really boring at times), this book was written especially for teens and is always interesting.

Although I'm a retired teenager, I still remember what it was like to be one. I could've sworn I was riding an emotional roller coaster most of the time. Looking back, I'm actually amazed that I survived. Barely. I'll never forget the time in seventh grade when I fell in love with a girl named Nicole. I told my friend Clar to tell her that I liked her (I was too scared to speak directly to girls so I used messengers). Clar completed his mission and returned and reported.

"Hey, Sean, I told Nicole that you liked her."

"What'd she say!?" I asked impatiently.

"She said, 'Ohh, Sean? He's fat!'" Clar laughed.

I was devastated. I felt like hiding in my room and never coming out again. I vowed to hate girls for life. Luckily my hormones prevailed and I began liking girls again.

I've interviewed a lot of teens in the making of this book. I suspect that some of the struggles they shared with me will be familiar to you too:

"There's too much to do and not enough time. I've got school, homework, job, friends, parties, and family on top of everything else. I'm totally stressed out. Help!"

"How can I feel good about myself when I don't match up? Everywhere I look I am reminded that someone else is smarter, or prettier, or more popular. I can't help but think, 'If I only had her hair, her clothes, her personality, her boyfriend, then I'd be happy.'?"

"If I could only get my parents off my back I might be able to live my life. It seems they're constantly nagging, and I can't ever seem to satisfy them."

"I know I'm not living the way I should. I'm into everything—drugs, drinking, sex, you name it. But when I'm with my friends, I give in and just do what everyone else is doing."

"I've started another diet. I think it's my fifth one this year. I really do want to change, but I just don't have the discipline to stick with it. Each time I start a new diet I have hope. But it's usually only a short time before I blow it. And then I feel awful."

"I'm not doing too well in school right now. If I don't get my grades up I'll never get into college."

"I'm moody and get depressed often and I don't know what to do about it."

"I feel as if my life is out of control."

These problems are real, and you can't turn off real life. I won't pretend you can. Instead, I'll give you a set of tools to help you deal with real life. What are they? ***The 7 Habits of Highly Effective Teens*** or, said another way, the seven characteristics that happy and successful teens all over the world have in common.

By now, you're probably wondering what these habits are so I might as well end the suspense. Here they are, followed by a brief explanation:

Habit 1:

Be Proactive

Take responsibility for your life.

Habit 2:

Begin with the End in Mind

Define your mission and goals in life.

Habit 3:

Put First Things First

Prioritize, and do the most important things first.

Habit 4:

Think Win-Win

Have an everyone-can-win attitude.

Habit 5:

Seek First to Understand, Then to Be Understood

Listen to people sincerely.

Habit 6:

Synergize

Work together to achieve more.

Habit 7:

Sharpen the Saw

Renew yourself regularly.

As the above diagram shows, the habits build upon one another. Habits 1, 2, and 3 deal with self-mastery. We call it the "private victory." Habits 4, 5, and 6 deal with relationships and teamwork. We call it the "public victory." You've got to get your personal act together before you can be a good team player. That's why the private victory comes before the public victory. The last habit, Habit 7, is the habit of renewal. It feeds all of the other six habits.

The habits seem pretty simple, don't they? But just wait till you see how powerful they can be! One great way to understand what the 7 Habits are is to understand what they are not. So here are the opposites, or:

The 7 Habits of Highly Defective Teens

Habit 1: React

Blame all of your problems on your parents, your stupid teachers, your lousy neighborhood, your boy- or girlfriend, the government, or something or somebody else. Be a victim. Take no responsibility for your life. If you're hungry, eat. If you're bored, make trouble. If someone yells at you, yell back. If you feel like doing something you know is wrong, go for it.

Habit 2: Begin with No End in Mind

Don't have a plan. Avoid goals at all costs. And never think about tomorrow. Why worry about the consequences of your actions? Live for the moment. Sleep around, get wasted, and party on, for tomorrow you die.

Habit 3: Put First Things Last

Whatever is most important in your life, don't do it until you have spent sufficient time watching videos of cute animals on YouTube, texting endlessly, and lounging around. Always put off studying until tomorrow. Make sure that fun things come before important things.

Habit 4: Think Win-Lose

See life as a vicious competition. If you want to be at the top of the popularity list, you'd better knock someone else off first. Don't let anyone else succeed at anything because, remember, if they win, you lose. If it looks like you're going to lose, however, make sure you drag that sucker down with you.

Habit 5: Seek First to Talk, Then Pretend to Listen

You were born with a mouth, so use it. Talk a lot. Always express your side of the story first. Once everyone understands your views, pretend to listen to theirs by nodding and saying "uh-huh" while daydreaming about what's for lunch. Or, if you really want their opinion, give it to them.

Habit 6: Don't Cooperate

Let's face it, other people are weird because they're different from you. So why try to get along with them? Teamwork's for the dogs. Since you always have the best ideas, you're better off doing everything by yourself. Be your own island.

Habit 7: Wear Yourself Out

Be so busy with life that you never take time to renew or improve yourself. Never study. Don't learn anything new. Avoid exercise like the plague. And, for heaven's sake, stay away from good books, nature, or anything else that may inspire you.

As you can see, the habits listed above are recipes for disaster. Yet many of us indulge in them . . . regularly (me included). And, given this, it's no wonder that life can really stink at times.

WHAT EXACTLY ARE HABITS?

Habits are things we do repeatedly. But most of the time we're hardly aware that we even have them. They're on autopilot.

Some habits are good, such as:

- Exercising regularly
- Planning ahead
- Showing respect for others

Some are bad, including:

- Thinking negatively
- Feeling inferior
- Blaming others

And some don't really matter, like:

- Taking showers before bed instead of in the morning
- Putting hot sauce on every meal
- Listening to music while you exercise

Depending on what they are, our habits will either make us or break us. We become what we repeatedly do. As writer Samuel Smiles put it:

*Sow a thought, and you reap an act;
Sow an act, and you reap a habit;
Sow a habit, and you reap a character;
Sow a character, and you reap a destiny.*

Luckily, you are stronger than your habits. You can change them. For example, try folding your arms. Now fold them in the opposite way. Feels pretty strange, right? But if you folded them in the opposite way for thirty days in a row, it wouldn't feel so strange. You wouldn't even have to think about it. You'd get in the habit.

At any time you can look yourself in the mirror and say, "Hey, I don't like that about myself," and you can exchange a bad habit for a better one. It may not always be easy, but it's always possible.

Maybe not every idea in this book will work for you. But you don't have to be perfect to see results, either. Just living some of the habits some of the time can help you experience changes in your life you never thought possible.

The 7 Habits can help you:

- Get control of your life
- Improve your relationships with your friends
- Make smarter decisions
- Get along with your parents
- Overcome addictions and self-destructive habits
- Define your values and what matters most to you
- Get more done in less time
- Increase your self-confidence
- Be happy
- Find balance between school, work, friends, dating, and everything else

One final point. It's your book, so use it. Get out a pen or highlighter and mark it up. Don't be afraid to underline, circle, or bookmark your favorite ideas. Take notes in the margins. Scribble. Reread the stories that inspire you and memorize the quotes that give you hope. Try doing the "baby steps" at the end of each chapter, which were designed to help you start living the habits immediately. You'll get a lot more out of the book if you do.

You may also want to check out the hotlines and websites listed at the back of the book for additional help or information.

If you're the kind of reader who likes to skip around looking for cartoons and tidbits, that's fine. But at some point you ought to read the book from start to finish, because the 7 Habits are sequential. Each chapter builds on the last. Habit 1 comes before Habit 2 (and so on) for a reason.

So what do you say? Make my day and read this book!