Introduction to 7 Habits of Highly Effective Teens

“We first make our habits, then our habits make us.” – English Poet

***7 Habits of Highly Effective Teens*** are a set of tools to help teens deal with real life – they can also be looked at as seven characteristics that happy and successful teens have in common.

**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.*

So what exactly are habits? Habits are things we do repeatedly. Most of the time we are hardly aware that we are doing them; we are simply on autopilot.

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 addiction
* 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, and everything else

Paradigms and Principles

“*Better keep yourself clean and bright; you are the window through which you see the whole world.”* George Bernard Shaw

**So What’s a Paradigm?**

Paradigm is another word for ***perception***. A paradigm is the way you see something, your point of view, frame of reference, or belief. Paradigms are like glasses. When you have incomplete paradigms about yourself or life in general, it’s like wearing glasses with the wrong prescription. That lens affects how you see everything else. As a result, what you see is what you get. If you believe you’re dumb, that very belief will make you dumb. On the other hand, if you believe you’re smart, that belief will cast a rosy hue on everything you do. We have paradigms about ourselves, about other people, and about life in general. Let’s take a look at each.

**Paradigms of Self**

* Negative self-paradigms can put limitations on us; positive self-paradigms can bring out the best in us. Ask yourself, are your self-paradigms helping or hindering you?
* If you walk through life wearing glasses that say “I can do it” or “I matter,” that belief will put a positive spin on everything else.
* How do you fix your paradigm if it’s all contorted? One way is to spend time with someone who believes in you and builds you up. Ask any successful person and most will tell you that they had a person who believed in them… a teacher, a friend, a parent, a guardian, a sister, a grandmother, a mentor.

**Paradigms of Others**

* We not only have paradigms about ourselves, but about others too. Seeing things from a different point of view can help us understand why other people act the way they do.
* Our paradigms of others are often incomplete, inaccurate, or completely messed up. *We shouldn’t be* so quick to judge, label or form rigid opinions of others. From our limited point of view, we seldom see the whole picture, or have all the facts.
* *We should* open our minds and hearts to new information, ideas, and points of view, and be willing to change our paradigms when it becomes clear they are wrong.

**Paradigms of Life**

* You can usually tell what your life-paradigm is if you ask yourself, “What is the driving force of my life?” “What do I spend my time thinking about?” “Who or what is my obsession?”
* Whatever is most important to you will become your paradigm, or your life-center. For teens, some popular life-centers are: friends, stuff, boyfriend/girlfriend, school parents, sports, hobbies, heroes, enemies, self and work.
* They each have their good points, but they are all incomplete in one way or another and they’ll mess you up if you center your life on them.

**Principle-Centered – The Real Thing**

* Just as there are natural laws in the physical world, like gravity, there are laws – or principles – in the human world.
* They apply to everyone, rich or poor, king or peasant, male or female or other.
* If you break them you will fail, if you live by them you will excel.
* Here are a few examples:
  + Honesty
  + Service
  + Love
  + Hard work
  + Respect
  + Gratitude
  + Moderation
  + Fairness
  + Integrity
  + Loyalty
  + Responsibility
* It takes faith to live by principles, especially when you see people close to you get ahead in life by lying, cheating, indulging, manipulating, and serving only themselves.
* What you might not see, however, is that breaking principles always catches up to them in the end.
* ***Putting principles first is the key to doing better in all other centers.***
* If you live the principles of service, respect and love, for instance, you’re likely to pick up more friends and be a more stable boyfriend or girlfriend.

Baby Steps – Shifting Your Paradigms and Applying Principles

1. The next time you look in the mirror say something positive about yourself.
2. Show appreciation for someone’s point of view today. Say something like “Hey that’s a cool idea.”
3. Think of a limiting paradigm you might have of yourself, such as “I’m not outgoing.” Now, do something today that totally contradicts that paradigm.
4. Think of a loved one or close friend who has been acting out of character lately. Consider what might be causing them to act that way.
5. When you have nothing to do, what is it that occupies your thoughts? Remember, whatever is most important to you will become your paradigm or life-center.
6. Begin today to treat others as you would want them to treat you. The Golden Rule rules! Don’t be impatient, complain about leftovers, or bad-mouth someone, unless you want the same treatment.
7. Sometime soon, find a quiet place where you can be alone. Think about what matters most to you.
8. Listen carefully to the lyrics of the music you listen to most frequently. Evaluate if they are in harmony with the principles you believe in.
9. When you do your chores at home or work tonight, try out the principle of hard work. Go the extra mile and do more than is expected.
10. The next time you’re in a tough situation and don’t know what to do, ask yourself, “What principle should I apply?” Examples: honestly, love, loyalty, hard work, patience. Now, follow the principle and don’t look back.