

Habits 1 & 2

By Suze Hargraves

Today begins an article series based on Steven R. Covey's 7 Habits of Highly Effective People. We're going to explore a way to make better choices by thinking differently and having a plan that's based on common sense, personal control and (My regular readers have guessed this one already I know!) personal responsibility. If you've never read the book don't panic. You won't be lost. The 7 Habits are very easy to understand and even easier to work with.

The first of the habits is BE PROACTIVE. The dictionary defines "proactive" as "controlling a situation by causing something to happen rather than waiting to respond to it after it happens". Now that we know what it means, let's apply it to our health.

The key to being proactive with your health is your voice. You start using it to schedule your annual checkup. Your annual exam is a great opportunity to ask questions, talk about diet, exercise, review your medications and discuss other ways you can be a proactive, responsible participant in your own care. It's best to have your questions or concerns written down. If you're anything like me, you get into the office and can't remember a thing. Nobody will think you're weird and your provider will be thrilled with your proactive approach to your health. Even if you've already had your annual this year you can start your proactive approach to your healthcare today. Jot things down in a notebook that you may not remember the next time you see your healthcare provider. Include concerns, slips and falls, aches and pains and other ailments. Remember, a proactive approach to healthcare starts with your voice. Use it.

The second habit is BEGIN WITH THE END IN MIND. This one forces us to think long term about the decisions we make today. Creating the senior years we dream of begins with taking care of ourselves in the here and now. Close your eyes and visualize yourself as an older person. What do you see? If you see yourself going for hikes, gardening or just having an active life, then your lifestyle today needs to nurture that vision. Nobody ever pictures themselves stricken by serious illness, but the reality is that it does happen. Having the strongest, healthiest body and mind you can will give you a significantly better position from which to deal with serious illnesses.

Next week we'll touch on putting first things first and thinking win/win. In the meantime think about how you are going to apply the first two habits. How can they fit into my life? Create a conscious way of life for yourself that promotes good health habits. Say to yourself at least 10 times a day: "I love, honor and respect myself".

It's not complicated: your health starts with you. Make a habit of taking care of yourself.

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