

lifelines

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LISTENING TO CLARIFY, PROBE, AND REFRAME

Listening to Clarify

One of the most difficult tasks you will have is to be sure the words you hear have the same meaning for you as they have for the other person speaking. Often, people hear the same words but get a different meaning. This is because everything people hear is affected by their own personal knowledge and backgrounds. When everyone is speaking the same language, they are often tempted to assume that they know what the other person really means.

Listening to clarify helps you to check that assumption and verify the meaning intended by the other person speaking. This is often true with words that express generalized concepts. Words and phrases like "irresponsible," "communication problems," or "personality difficulties" are good examples of words that are easily misunderstood. If there is the least doubt in your mind, you need to ask questions for clarification. These questions should be open-ended and carry lead-ins such as

- "I'm not sure what you mean by..."
- "Could you please clarify for me...?"
- "Please explain to me what you mean by..."
- "Would you please say a little more about...?"

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LISTENING TO CLARIFY, PROBE, AND REFRAME

Listening to Probe for More Information

Early in the communication, the other person often mentions an incident or issue that may seem clear at the time. However, as the discussion continues you may need further clarification. Similarly, if there appear to be hidden deeper emotions, you may want to ask for more information.


At such times, it is appropriate for you to ask such questions or make such statements as

- ""Would you please tell me more about...?"
- "I sense that there is more about..."
- "I sense that there is more that you need to say."
- "I hear some strong feeling in your words. Do you want to tell us more about that?"
- "Could you please explain a little more about the significance of this event?"

As a general rule in probing for information, it is better never to ask "why" questions.

These questions are often threatening and raise defences, because they confront the other person's judgment and motives.

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LISTENING TO CLARIFY, PROBE, AND REFRAME

It is also very important to use questions carefully.

Interrupting by asking frequent questions, especially in the initial stages of the conversation, can distract the other person and deflect them from the story they need to tell. Generally, both clarifying questions and probing questions should be held until the other person has completed what they want to say.

Listening to reframe

When both you and the other person are satisfied that all the issues have been discussed, it is helpful to bring the discussion into focus by summarizing the problems. The summary may involve reframing the key problems in the form of "interests versus positions."

Reframing is an excellent way to transition into problem solving. At this point, the focus of the discussion changes dramatically from what has happened in the past to what both parties would like in the future.

The purpose of reframing is to

- Accurately identify the interests and needs of both you and the other person
- Break down and prioritize problems into small, manageable parts

Use lead-ins that will frame the issue as a joint problem:

- "How can we...?"
- "What can be done to...?"
- "What time frame is acceptable to...?"

Problems should be framed as interests or needs. Use an open-ended question that requires both you and the other person to search for solutions to your joint problem. Here is an example: "What can be done to meet 'X' need for you and 'Y' need for me?"

Using this technique moves the conversation toward identifying solutions that meet both of your needs. This type of collaborative negotiation allows the needs of both of you to be met without sacrificing your relationship.

U.S. Department of Veteran's Affairs, Alternative Dispute Resolution. (Updated 2015, August 15). *Listening to clarify, probe, and reframe*. Retrieved September 12, 2019, from <http://www.va.gov>

KEEPING AN OPEN MIND

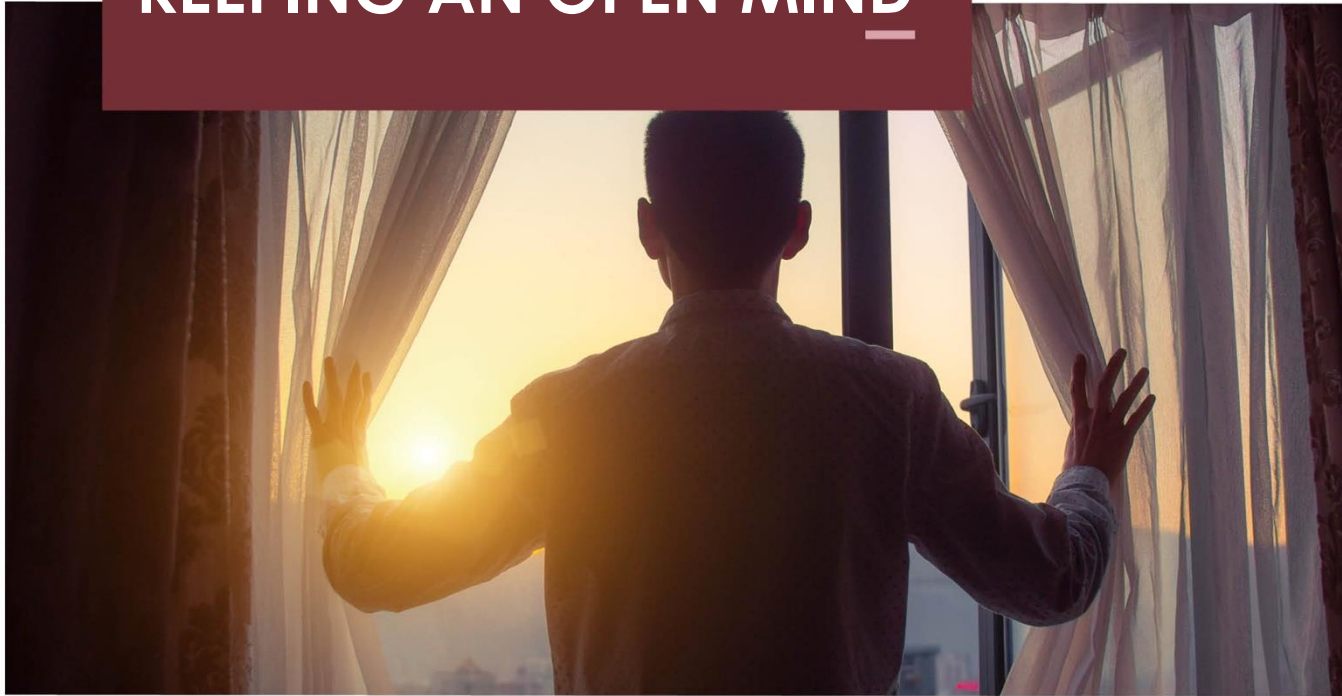


To be open-minded is to be receptive to new ideas and information, even when they challenge your beliefs and understanding of the world. Open-minded people consider differing views and opinions with curiosity and a desire to understand. They seek out new perspectives in their efforts to learn, grow, and make more informed choices.

Open-minded people can have strong beliefs and deep expertise, but they are willing to question their beliefs and knowledge when presented with new evidence and new thinking. Having an open mind is an important element in critical and rational thinking. It's also a foundation for creativity, learning, empathy, and personal growth

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KEEPING AN OPEN MIND



Why It's Hard to Be Open-Minded

While being open-minded has tremendous benefits, it's not easy. For most people, it takes conscious effort. That's because the human mind tends to streamline perceptions and reactions with energy-saving shortcuts. For example, people tend to sort information into categories based on their previous experience and interpret new information based on their beliefs. When new information or ideas are encountered that don't fit those categories or that challenge those beliefs, it's easier to reject the new information or distort your understanding of it than it is to rethink your categories or beliefs. Other mental shortcuts include stereotyping people, judging people based on first impressions or single characteristics, and making snap decisions.

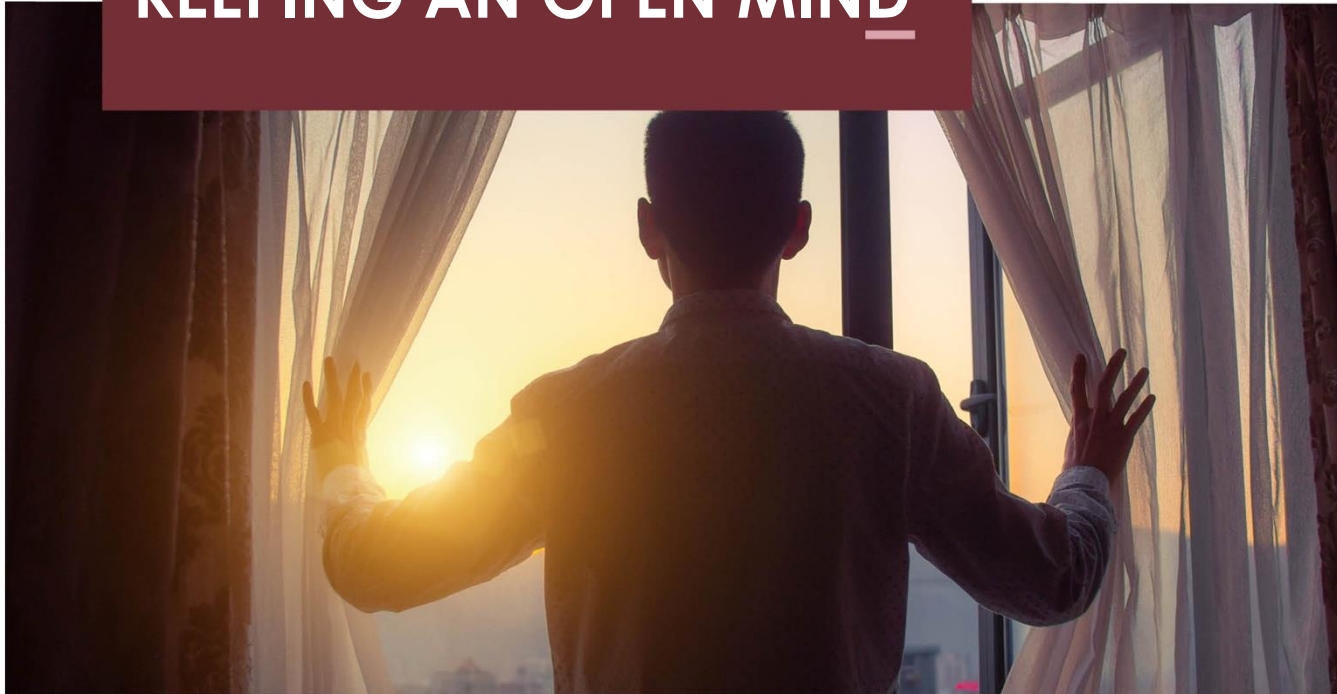
Being open-minded can involve reevaluating memories, past experiences, and beliefs in the light of new information. It might require you to admit that you've been wrong. That can take real mental effort. It can also be uncomfortable—at least until you experience the benefits of an open-minded outlook.

How to Be More Open-Minded

- **Be humble about what you know and don't know.** Researchers call this practicing intellectual humility:
 - Recognize that your understanding of the world isn't perfect and that perspectives other than your own are valid.
 - Accept that there are gray areas in life, where choices aren't black and white.
 - Be aware of your biases—the ways your thoughts and perceptions may be distorted by your brain's shortcuts or your past experiences. Key among these is confirmation bias, which causes people to favor information that fits with their existing beliefs and to dismiss information that doesn't.
 - Be willing to admit you have been wrong and revise your views.
 - Practice saying, "I don't know," or introducing your thoughts with "I could be wrong, but..."

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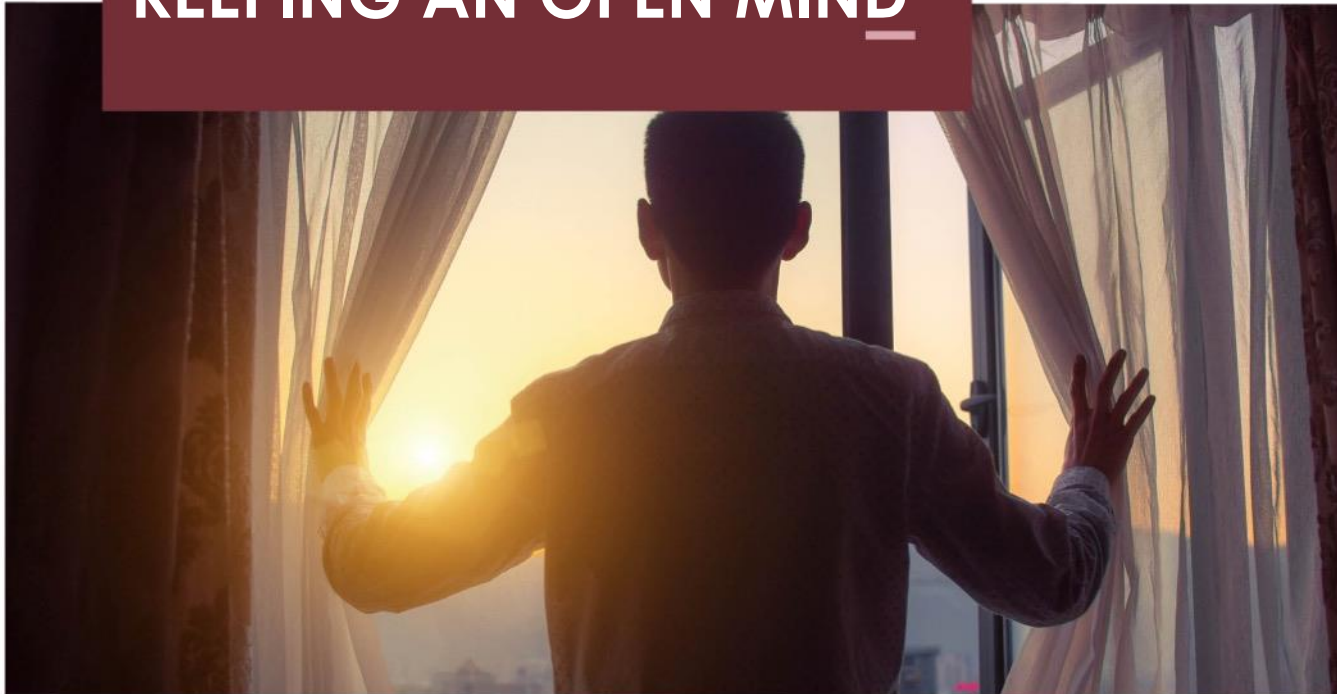
KEEPING AN OPEN MIND



- **Be curious.** Cultivate your desire to inquire, explore, learn, and understand. People tend to have a strong natural curiosity in childhood, then allow it to weaken as they grow older. That's partly from fear of being embarrassed by showing ignorance. To be more open-minded, push past that hesitation and rediscover the joy of natural curiosity:
 - Be open to all information, not just information that confirms what you already believe.
 - Read a variety of books, articles, and online content. Fiction can put you in the shoes of other people and help you become more empathetic to different life experiences and viewpoints. Nonfiction and journalism can introduce you to new areas of knowledge and new information about the world. Online information is easy to access, but you need to be alert to the ways search engines and social media limit your exposure to different views by curating what you see to match what you already believe.
 - Seek out other perspectives. Make a point of talking with people and reading the writings of people who have views or backgrounds that are different from yours, or who have discovered information that challenges your understanding and beliefs.
 - Ask questions to understand new information and different perspectives. Push past your desire to appear knowledgeable, and overcome your fear of coming across as uninformed or naive. Learn something new from everyone you meet, whether it's about their lives or backgrounds, or lessons they have learned through experience or study. Ask open-ended questions to encourage them to tell you more. Ask yourself questions, too: "How do I know this is true?" "Are the sources I rely on trustworthy?" "Have I considered different ways of explaining this?"

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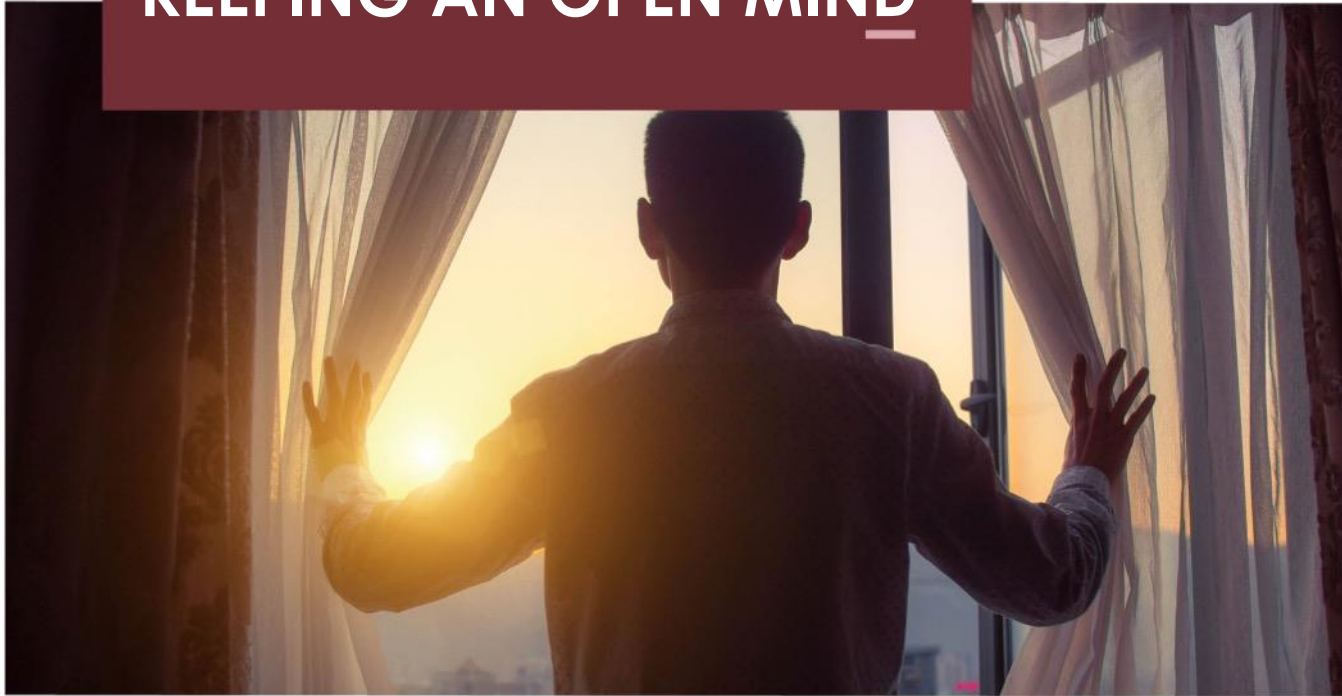
KEEPING AN OPEN MIND



- Listen to learn and understand. It's common to listen with only partial attention as you think about what you want to say in reply. Let your curiosity take charge from your ego as you really listen to what others have to say. Turn off or set aside any distractions and focus on the other person. Test your understanding of what they are saying by putting what they say in your own words and asking whether you have heard correctly
- **Spend time with people who have different ideas and perspectives.** Widen your circle of friends to include people who are different from you. Find the areas where you agree, but don't be afraid to explore those where you don't. Being a good listener with someone who agrees with you or has a similar background is easy. Challenge yourself to really listen to friends and acquaintances when they share ideas, opinions, and experiences that don't fit easily with your own view of the world.
- **Slow down.** Initial reactions and snap judgments are often driven by emotion, habit, and unconscious bias. Sometimes they're right, but not always. People's brains make it hard to recognize when this is happening. It's common to make a snap judgment based on rapid unconscious thinking, emotion, or bias, then have the conscious mind create, more slowly, a rational reason to explain the judgment—which may have nothing to do with the actual emotional or biased reaction. Some researchers characterize responses based on emotion, habit, or bias as "fast" thinking, and rational responses as "slow" thinking. When you have a quick reaction to something, especially a negative reaction, slow down and consider why that might be. Challenge your rational self to consider more positive and accepting responses.
- **Calm down.** When you're anxious, upset, or under pressure, it's hard to be open-minded. Snap judgments and quick negative reactions

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KEEPING AN OPEN MIND



tend to take over. When you find this happening, step back from the situation and calm down. Reconsider the issue, or reengage in the conversation later when you are more relaxed

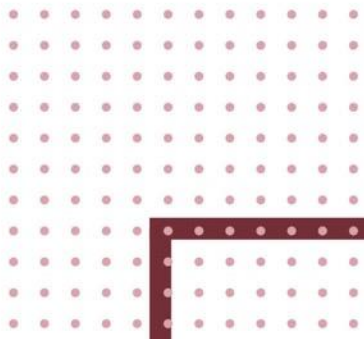
- **Reframe negative thoughts.** Positive reframing is the technique of looking at things in new ways to find the positive in them—the opportunities in change, the good in other people, and the strengths in yourself. When you have a negative reaction to a new idea, an event, or another person, consider the merits of the idea, the good qualities of the other person, other explanations for what is happening, or how this might lead to something positive.
- **Embrace new experiences.** Step out of your comfort zone. Try something new. Do something spontaneous. Listen to a different style of music. Try food you've never had before. Accept an invitation to lunch or coffee with a new neighbor or work colleague. Take a class in something you know nothing about. Read books written by people from other

cultures. Learn another language. Travel to another country. Breaking out of your routine and trying new experiences can help you realize that there is more than one way to live life and view the world.

- **Practice mindfulness.** Mindfulness is a form of meditation in which you focus on what you are experiencing as you meditate, accept those feelings and sensations, and bring yourself to be in the present moment, without thoughts of the past or future. With its focus on acceptance and being in the present moment, the practice of mindfulness can help you let go of worries about the future, regrets about the past, and negative thinking about new experiences. Mindfulness can help bring out your natural curiosity and open your mind to new perspectives and ideas.

Morgan, H. (2022, December 30). *Keeping an open mind* (B. Schuette & E. Morton, Eds.). Raleigh, NC: Workplace Options (WPO).

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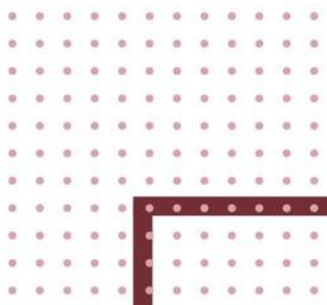


WHY TIME MANAGEMENT?

When asked to identify things that stress them, adults almost always list time as one of the top three. Children learn from adult-modeled behavior. Is it any surprise, then, that children, like adults, almost always list time as a major stressor? It is an even more certain truth that as children reach their teen years, time becomes even more limited. It's as if they have been taught the worst skills imaginable. The issue that stresses most adults today will go on to stress their children, and their children's children, and generations yet to come. There is a fundamental truth that has been ignored, and the ruse is up!

The simple reality and ultimate truth is that time is not manageable. Time is a finite, limited, predictable, but renewable resource. There are 1,440 minutes in a day, 7 days in a week, and 52 weeks in a year. All the time management in the world will never change that. It is not time that needs to be managed, but rather the utilization of that resource. Time spent today is forever gone, but tomorrow you get a new day and a new chance to manage your life within the limited parameters of the minutes, hours, and days in your years. With time limited, how do you learn to do better when managing your time and teaching your children to do the same? The answer is that if you wish to help children with time and life-management skills, you as an adult need to better model those things you would have your children do. You need to model good time and life-management skills in order to teach.

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WHY TIME MANAGEMENT?

The single best teaching tool for time management is to model the desired behavior. Learn to be a time manager yourself. The best way for you as an adult to learn time management is to take a time management course including the use of a tool that will help you organize your life. There are many companies that manufacture time management planners and calendars. For a fee, some of these companies also offer time management programs. Enrolling in one of these, taking one of the many other time management courses, or retaking one of the courses, is an excellent way to learn or to remind yourself of the things you can do to make yourself a better time and life manager. Consider using a system or a planner or enrolling in a course.

"But I don't have time to take a time management course." If that sounds like you, run, do not walk, to the nearest time management course! In your case it may be a matter of urgency, not just importance, but if you are having difficulty managing time, you may not understand that yet.

Time management is so important that many companies insist that their top performers take time management courses to improve the efficiency of those managers. However, time management is not just about improving your efficiency at work. The efficient utilization of time gives individuals the opportunity to maximize their potential to do what it is they will do with their time. The efficient utilization of time improves efficacy, productivity, and personal satisfaction. Learning to manage your time will so improve your life quality, by whatever definition you choose, as to make time management a high priority for completion. Schedule it now!

Stephen Covey, author of *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People*, believes in time management. Covey believes that to be successful you must take charge of your life. He has identified seven practices that lead to successful lives, and the foundation of his seven habits are the notions of time management.

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WHY TIME MANAGEMENT?

Seven Habits of Highly Effective People

1. Be proactive. Take responsibility for your life.
2. Begin with the end in mind. Define your mission and goals in life.
3. Put first things first. Prioritize, and do the most important things first.
4. Think win-win. Have an everyone-can-win attitude.
5. Seek first to understand, then to be understood. Listen to people sincerely.
6. *Synergize*: Work together to achieve more.
7. Sharpen the saw. Renew yourself regularly.

Of these seven habits, habits 1, 2, 3, and 7 (or 57% of the seven), involve the better use of time. Have you had enough of the argument? Take a time management course! Meanwhile, continue reading self-help tips on time management.

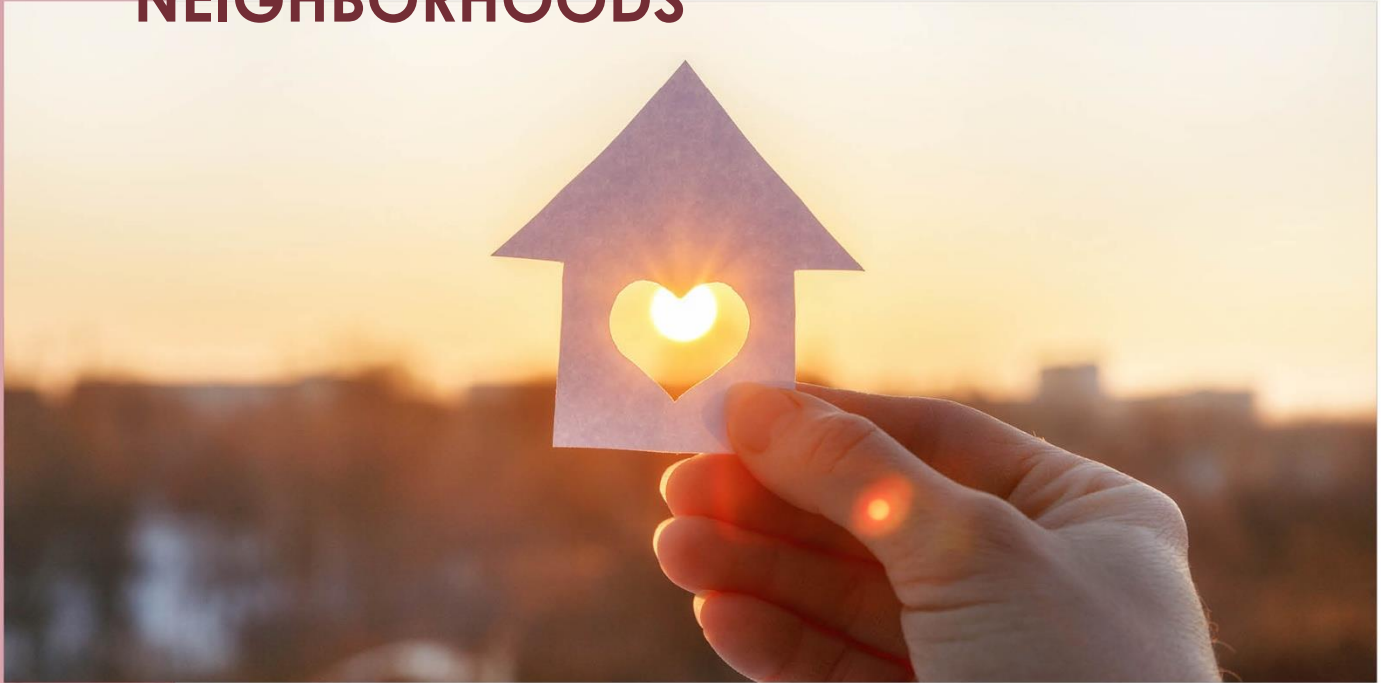
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This was adapted from Covey, S. (2004). *The 7 habits of highly effective people*. New York: Free Press.

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NURTURING HEALTHY NEIGHBORHOODS



Communities affect health.

You probably already know that your genes can affect your health. So can the choices you make, such as getting enough exercise and eating healthy food. Did you know that where you live can affect your health, too? U.S. National Institutes of Health (NIH)–funded researchers are looking at how the environment around you, from how many trees you can see to how far you have to travel to get fresh food, influences your health.

Green Spaces

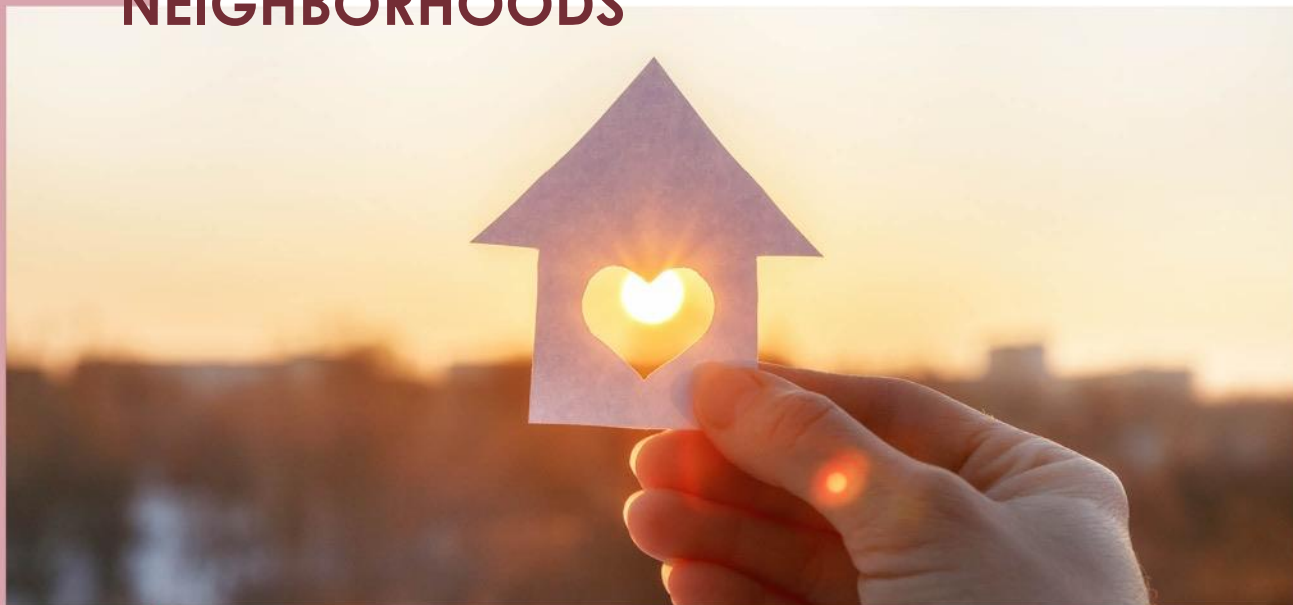
Studies show that green spaces, such as parks or woods, seem to affect your health for the better.¹ Dr. Francine Laden, an epidemiologist at the Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health, analyzed data from a huge national study to look at how green space affected people's lives. She found that those who lived near green spaces were less likely to die over an eight-year period.²

No one knows exactly why living close to green space has this effect. The plants themselves may be part of the reason. Plants pull pollutants out of the air and cool the neighborhood. It may be that green space creates a place to meet other people and help build social connections. Strong social ties have been linked to a longer life.

Simply being exposed to nature has been shown to improve mood, reduce anxiety, and enhance self-esteem. People who see greenery every day may have better mental health and be less stressed. Stress increases your risk of heart disease, diabetes, and other diseases.

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NURTURING HEALTHY NEIGHBORHOODS



- In one NIH-funded study, researchers cleaned up vacant city lots and planted grass and trees. Other vacant lots in the same city were left alone. People who lived near the newly green lots said they felt less depressed and better about themselves after the change. In poorer neighborhoods, crime also fell near the green lots.³
- Living near a busy road can affect your health, too. Laden and her colleagues analyzed data on a group of women who were using in vitro fertilization to help get pregnant. The women who lived more than a quarter mile from a major road were more likely to eventually have a baby than those who lived within a few hundred feet of a major road.⁴
- Roads and highways are noisy to live near. Studies have found that noise can increase the risk of heart disease and depression. That may be because noise can cause stress or interrupt your sleep. People who live near a busy road may also breathe in more air pollution, which increases the risk of lung cancer, heart disease, and other conditions.

Getting Active

Your neighborhood can also affect how easy it is for you to exercise. People in urban and suburban areas can often walk to a coffee shop, school, or work. People in rural areas are more likely to have to drive to these places.

"The human body is meant to move. The body works a lot better when people are moving more," says Dr. Ross Brownson, a public health expert at Washington University in St. Louis.

People who don't exercise are more likely to be overweight or obese and have diabetes, high blood pressure, and many other health problems. People in rural areas may also live along roads with no sidewalks. These factors may be part of why people who live in rural areas are more likely to be obese than people who live in urban areas, Brownson says. He has worked on NIH-funded projects that study ways to encourage people in rural areas to exercise more—for example, by promoting the use of walking trails.⁵

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NURTURING HEALTHY NEIGHBORHOODS



If you want to exercise more, Brownson says, figure out what kind of physical activity you enjoy and would be willing to stick with. Then look for opportunities. If you're interested in walking but there's nowhere safe to walk in your area, get together with other people and talk about how to bring about change, he says.

"We've seen this happen in a number of rural communities, where you build a coalition and you come together and say, 'We need safer places for our kids to play and our residents to walk and spend time,'" Brownson says.

There are many ways to make walking in your neighborhood safer and easier, he says. For example, a walking trail could be built around a playground so that children could play while parents walked on the trail. Churches might donate land, or a trail could go around a ball field or along a creek.

Eating Healthy

In some neighborhoods, it's not easy to get healthy food. The U.S. Department of Agriculture calls low-income communities without full-service supermarkets "food deserts." Food deserts can occur in both urban and rural areas. Food deserts not only lack grocery stores. They are likely to have stores selling cheap snacks that aren't very nutritious.

People with chronic health conditions often get specific instructions from their doctors on what to eat. For example, people with high blood pressure are often told to follow the DASH diet (Dietary Approaches to Stop Hypertension), which emphasizes fruits, vegetables, and whole grains

"It can be a struggle to follow such a diet if, in the community where you live, it is hard to access such foods," says Dr. Deidra Crews, an expert on kidney disease at Johns Hopkins Medicine. "These may also be people who don't have the financial means to travel outside of their community to access it."

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NURTURING HEALTHY NEIGHBORHOODS



Crews and her team work with Black Americans with kidney disease and high blood pressure who live in low-income neighborhoods in Baltimore. People in poor neighborhoods are at greater risk of kidney disease, and so are Black Americans.⁶

Crews' team is testing whether giving healthy food directly to participants can help improve their health. They're given \$30 worth of fruits, vegetables, nuts, and beans every week, as well as advice on how to follow a healthy diet.

Farmers markets are one way to bring fruits and vegetables into neighborhoods without grocery stores. If you want to set up a farmers market in your community, ask if others would be interested. You may be able to get help from a community organization or from a local or state government.

"If people can get to them easily by foot, then even better; that's an opportunity to get in some physical activity," Crews adds

Creating Change

Changing your neighborhood can be tough. It may mean getting together with neighbors and talking to local officials about making more walking paths, sidewalks, and bike lanes. You might reach out to local institutions, such as churches and schools, with land that could be used. You might talk to convenience store owners about offering more healthy foods.

"It doesn't all have to be tackled at the same time," says NIH health specialist and researcher Dr. Adelaida Rosario. "Anything that one community feels is relevant and important and that the majority of its citizens can benefit from—if people rally behind it, they can get it in their neighborhood."

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NURTURING HEALTHY NEIGHBORHOODS



Creating Healthy Communities

Looking for ways to make your neighborhood healthier?

- Create a community garden.
- Bring in a farmers market.
- Talk to store owners about offering healthier foods.
- Attend community planning meetings and talk about creating parks and trails.
- Plant a tree or find other ways to make your neighborhood greener.
- Start a walking group with friends, family, or neighbors.
- Participate in community activities to reduce crime and violence

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