

Habit 2: Beginning With the End in Mind

Stephen Covey taught that all things are created twice. There's a mental or first creation, and a physical or second creation. This is clearly evident in the process of building a home. You envision what your ideal home will be and you take that vision to the architect. Together you work through each detail of the house until you have the perfect blueprint, fulfilling creation number one. Next you hand that blueprint over to a contractor for your home to be physically created with wood, brick, and mortar. This habit (number two of *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People*), can be implemented in every aspect of our lives – including spring renewal efforts and activities. Here are a few simple steps you can take to understand and focus on the end you're working toward.

Get introspective. What do you really want to achieve? Covey recommends imagining yourself at a funeral. Take time to consider all of the details, the flowers, speakers, guests, and conversations. How do these details change when you look in the coffin and see yourself? What do you hope people say about you and your life? What achievements do you hope they highlight? Once you have the details clear in your mind, work backwards to create goals right now that will get you where you want to be in the future. In order for this vision to undergo its first creation, you need to define it in detail. Write them in your planner so you can look back on them and remember what you're trying to achieve.

Be honest. Now that you know what you hope to achieve, assess your current situation and figure out where you are now in regards to where you're trying to go. You may find that you need to make serious adjustments to get yourself on the right path, and that's okay. It's better you find out now than anytime in the future. It's important that you're brutally honest with yourself during this step. The more clearly you see your current situation, the better prepared you'll be to remove yourself from it and get on a new path to chase your dreams.

Write a personal mission statement. A mission statement is a sentence or two that defines your purpose, why that purpose matters to you, and how you plan to pursue it. This exercise can help you visualize and define any goal, big or small. Creating a mission statement takes time and energy but allows you to work strategically toward your goals. Once you have it, refer to it often and let it serve as a reminder of who you are and what your purpose is. Adapt it as needed, but always be sure it's grounded in honest principles and authentic ambitions.

Beginning with an ending really does have its merits. An ending is a real destination, it's tangible and concrete. Having a fixed point provides us with something we can test our current situation against and check in with to see our growth and success. We can also measure any decision against it and find whether the outcome will move us closer or further away from where we ultimately want to go. What end do you try to keep in mind? What helps you focus on your mission statement? Tell us in the comments below!