
Principle-Centered Living[®]

SUMMARY AND OVERVIEW

If you hold the end of a kite's string, you provide an anchor that allows the kite to soar high in the sky. Letting go of that string does not permit the kite to soar to greater heights. In fact, releasing your grip will only cause the kite to crash to the ground.

Likewise, correct principles act as an anchor and primary source of life support. Individuals who hold on to correct principles can reach their highest potential. Acting in their own and others' best interests, they make choices that best apply their values. They let their values drive their responses.

On the contrary, individuals who let go of correct principles fail. Anchored to social mirrors and models (e.g., money, work, possessions, pleasure, friends, and enemies), these people empower circumstances to guide and control them. They become reactive rather than proactive. Instead of choosing their own responses or causing things to happen, they respond to external conditions and stimuli. Their anchors do not provide stability.

The ideal anchor and life support is timeless and unchanging. Because correct principles are timeless and unchanging, adhering to them produces consistently honorable character and behavior. Hence, principle-centeredness is a fundamental paradigm of effective living.

GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

The concepts and exercises in this module will help you

Apply all Seven Habits™ in becoming more principle-centered in your personal and professional leadership.

This will happen as you:

- Understand that each person has a center.
- Learn the psychological vulnerabilities associated with alternate life centers.
- Identify the centers you tend to favor.
- Evaluate the impact of your current preferred centers on your effectiveness.
- Commit to make principles the center of your life.
- Realize that having principles as your center will provide a fundamental paradigm of effective living as you cultivate the four internal sources of strength:

Security

Guidance

Wisdom

Power

- Teach the concept of Principle-Centered Living® to others.
- Understand the relationship between Principle-Centered Living® and trustworthiness.

One man cannot do right in one department of life whilst he is occupied doing wrong in any other department. Life is one indivisible whole.

Mahatma Gandhi

DEFINITION

At the personal level, Principle-Centered Living® means that we center our lives on certain True North™ principles (e.g., fairness, equity, justice, integrity, honesty, and trust). True North principles are truths that are timeless and unchanging. People who base decisions on these principles make wise decisions and proactively take control of their lives.

EXPLANATION AND CENTRAL POINTS

1. Principles govern all aspects of our lives, whether in the physical realm or in the personal and interpersonal domain. Whether we accept or agree with them, they continue to operate under all conditions and in all circumstances. If we align ourselves with these principles, we will become more effective in all departments of our lives.
2. Each of us has at the center of our life some primary source that becomes our life-support system. For many of us, that source is represented by centers such as:

Boss

Profit

Technology

Employee

Customer

Policy

Competition

Distributor

Self

Program

3. To become more effective and productive, we must have principles as our center. Centering on principles is the key to developing a rich internal power in our lives. Having principles as a center leads us toward achieving the goals we set, aligning our choices and actions with our most profound priorities, and realizing our highest personal aspirations.
4. Although many of the centers seem to be worthwhile in and of themselves, focusing on any of them weakens and distracts us from our true course. To the degree people recognize and live in harmony with such basic principles as fairness, equity, justice, integrity, honesty, and trust, they move toward either survival and stability on the one hand or disintegration and destruction on the other.
5. Being principle-centered strengthens and enhances individuals' and organizations' degree of security, guidance, wisdom, and power.

Security

Security is our sense of worth, identity, emotional anchorage, self-esteem, and personal strength.

Guidance

Guidance is the direction we receive in life. It is an internal monitor serving as a conscience.

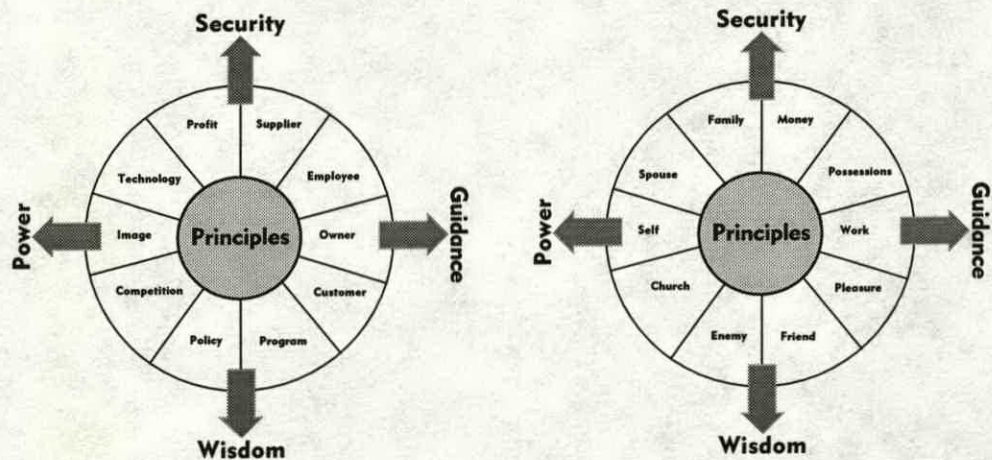
Wisdom

Wisdom is a sage perspective on life, a sense of balance, a keen understanding of how the various parts and principles apply and relate to each other.

Power

Power is the capacity to act, the strength and courage to accomplish tasks.

6. Some people are principle-centered. They have as their center timeless principles that allow them to make correct decisions, act with courage and compassion toward others, and proactively plan and be in control of their lives. By doing this, they increase their capacity to positively affect all parts of their lives through strengthening the four dimensions of themselves. They are not subject to circumstances or the whims of others.



7. Many people are centered on another aspect of their lives, such as money, job, friends, or spouse. In each case, their center renders them less capable of dealing with the challenges of life. They often compromise their values to satisfy the perceived needs of another person or thing. Their satisfaction is so tied up in worrying about and pleasing these

If I am what I have and what I have is lost, who then am I?

Erich Fromm

external influences that they can never find satisfaction in themselves—thus cheating themselves and their key relationships out of the power that exists within them.

8. Principle-centered people possess character, the first condition of trustworthiness.

Character

Character is the sum of integrity, maturity, and the Abundance Mentality™.

Integrity

Integrity means habits are aligned with values, words with deeds, and expressions with feelings. People of integrity make and keep commitments to themselves and to others.

Maturity

Maturity is courage balanced with consideration. Mature people are able to express their ideas and feelings with courage and consideration for the ideas and feelings of others.

Abundance Mentality™

The Abundance Mentality is the belief that there is plenty for everyone. People with Abundance Mentality deeply value other people and recognize unlimited potential for Third Alternative™ solutions.

Competence

The second condition of trustworthiness is competence. Competence can be broken into three categories: technical competence, conceptual competence, and interdependency.

Technical Competence

Technical competence embodies theory, method, and procedure. Understanding the theory behind the method enables individuals to choose the best method and design a feasible procedure. Various levels of learning exist within technical competence. For instance, a person might understand the method without knowing the theory, or might be aware of only one way to accomplish a given task. More specifically, a person might possess fine verbal communication skills but lack written communication skills.

Conceptual Competence

Conceptual competence is the ability to organize work and resources and effectively plan ahead and prepare. Intimately knowing the desired results will help in the conception of a plan.

Interdependency

Interdependency is knowing how to build enduring, productive relationships with other people. Competence in this area allows individuals to participate in synergistic problem solving because they value the differences, practice Empathic Listening™, and seek Third Alternatives.

EXAMPLES

If you ever tie your emotional life around the weaknesses of another, you empower those weaknesses to control you.

Stephen R. Covey

Principle-centered people would never have their happiness and peace determined by the moods or emotions of others. Principle-centered people create their security within themselves through exercising all of The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People®. They take the time necessary to Sharpen the Saw™ in all four areas: physical, social/emotional, mental, and spiritual. They know how to Be Proactive® in their planning, tying all their plans and goals back to their mission statement. They Begin with the End in Mind® when setting about tasks and are consistently focused on their most profound priorities. They have strong interpersonal relationships by virtue of the balance and nurturing they provide. Through this integrated approach they then increase their Circle of Influence™ in each life area which allows them to be immune to the negative attitudes and even “hidden agendas” of others. Being principle-centered follows the Law of the Harvest: it takes time; it takes patience; it takes endurance over the long haul to be successfully effective.

People who are not principle-centered will base their decisions and actions upon external influences rather than internal principles and values. Their relationships and responsibilities will operate with a lack of balance, thus leading to reduced effectiveness in all aspects of their lives.

IMPACT

Being principle-centered is the key to personal and interpersonal leadership. When we base our thoughts and actions on unchanging principles, our character and behavior are consistently honorable. We accomplish personal goals and enjoy healthy relationships because our principle center secures, guides, and empowers.

REFERENCES

The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People, pp. 109–128, 322–329.
Principle-Centered Leadership, pp. 13–25.

Principle-Centeredness: Part One

APPLICATION EXERCISE

What has been your primary source during the past few years in each of the areas listed below? Describe the effects from using that as the primary source in each case:

Guidance

Wisdom

Power

Security

Principle-Centeredness: Part Two

APPLICATION EXERCISE

How might a center based on principles have altered these outcomes?

Guidance

Wisdom

Power

Security
