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## WRITING AND USING A PERSONAL MISSION STATEMENT

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As we go deeply within ourselves, as we understand and realign our basic paradigms to bring them in harmony with correct principles, we create both an effective, empowering center and a clear lens through which we can see the world. We can then focus that lens on how we, as unique individuals, relate to that world.

Frankl says we detect rather than invent our missions in life. I like that choice of words. I think each of us has an internal monitor or sense, a conscience, that gives us an awareness of our own uniqueness and the singular contributions that we can make. In Frankl's words, "Everyone has his own specific vocation or mission in life. . . Therein he cannot be replaced, nor can his life be repeated. Thus, everyone's task is an unique as is his specific opportunity to implement it."

In seeking to give verbal expression to that uniqueness, we are again reminded of the fundamental importance of proactivity and of working within our circle of Influence. To seek some abstract meaning to our lives out in our Circle of Concern is to abdicate our proactive responsibility, to place our own first creation in the hands of circumstance and other people.

Our meaning comes from within. Again, in the words of Frankl, "Ultimately, man should not ask what the meaning of his life is, but rather must recognize that it is he who is asked. In a word, each man is questioned by life; and he can only answer to life by answering for his own life; to life he can only respond by being responsible."

Personal responsibility, or proactivity, is fundamental to the first creation. Returning to the computer metaphor, Habit 1 says "You are the programmer." Habit 2, then says, "Write the program." Until you accept the idea that you are responsible, that you are the programmer, you won't really invest in writing the program.

As proactive people, we can begin to give expression to what we want to be and to do in our lives. We can write a personal mission statement, a person constitution.

A mission statement is not something you write overnight. It takes deep introspection, careful analysis, thoughtful expression, and often many rewrites to produce it in final form. It may take you several weeks or even months before you feel really comfortable with it, before you feel it is a complete and concise expression of your innermost values and directions. Even then, you will want to review it regularly and make minor changes as the years bring additional insights or changing circumstances.

But fundamentally, your mission statement becomes your constitution, the solid expression of your vision and values. It becomes the criterion by which you measure everything else in your life.

I recently finished reviewing my own mission statement, which I do fairly regularly. Sitting on the edge of a beach, alone, at the end of a bicycle ride, I took out my organizer and hammered it out. It took several hours, but I felt a sense of clarity, a sense of organization and commitment, a sense of exhilaration and freedom.

I find the process is as important as the product. Writing or reviewing a mission statement changes you because it forces you to think through your priorities deeply, carefully, and to align your behavior with your beliefs. As you do, other people begin to sense that you're not being driven by everything that happens to you. You have a sense of mission about what you're trying to do and you are excited about it.

Stephen R Covey - The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People