

By [IU PIIC Mentors Loriann Hoffman and Melissa Petrilak](#)

For the most part, the number seven is associated with good luck. For coaches, there are 7 habits that can help to define effective relationships, roles, and leadership skills.

Over twenty-five years ago, author Stephen Covey wrote a best-seller titled, ***The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People***, which emphasized the principles of personal and professional effectiveness in order to achieve true change and successful leadership. Covey emphasizes the areas of self-mastery, teamwork, collaboration, as well as communication skills in order to influence and promote positive and effective working relationships. Although all seven habits are not formally addressed in this blog, the habits that are directly correlated to building coaching relationships will be explored.

The first habit that Covey addresses is to be ***Proactive***, and introduces the idea of two circles-the Circle of Concern and the Circle of Influence. The Circle of Concern encompasses everything that goes on around us (health, world peace, economy, family, etc.), while the Circle of Influence examines what we can influence and not. Coaches who embrace a proactive stance, focus their energies on things they can influence and would have the greatest impact for students.

Covey also introduces the idea of ***Think Win Win***, a frame of mind that embodies human interaction and collaboration. This habit ties directly into PIIC's BDA cycle of coaching. In order to achieve ***Think Win Win***, coaches need to focus on results that change practice and/or student achievement. Through the BDA cycle of coaching, a teacher and coach work together to mutually agree on "look fors," develop a data collection tool, and establish role delineation. During this phase of the coaching cycle, both plan together the lesson's content, rehearse the content delivery structures, then debrief after the lesson, thus creating a Win-Win situation for the coach, teacher, and students.

Seek First to Understand, then to Be Understood, is the fifth habit from the book and is most exemplified in the coach's communication skills with teachers and other school personnel. Before coaches can offer advice to teachers, coaches must first seek to deeply understand them and practice empathic listening. Empathic listening, also known as reflective or active

listening, helps to build trust between the coach and teacher. Through empathic listening, the coach lets the teacher know, "I understand your problem and how you feel about it, I am interested in what you are saying and I am not judging you." Engaging in this type of listening creates a relationship built on trust, respect, and mutual understanding.

Although Steven Covey's, ***7 Habits of Highly Effective People***, was first published as a framework for those in the business field, its universal message can help build a solid foundation for coaches in the world of education. These habits help to move coaches through a paradigm resulting in interdependence in which coaches and teachers collaborate to achieve something that can't be achieved independently.

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