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NOTES

A Personal Message

1. Commencement address by Barbara Bush to the 1990 graduating class at Wellesley College (Wellesley College Library, Wellesley, Mass.), pp. 4–5.

APERSONALMESSAGE

Dear Reader,

Never in all my life have I had such a passion for a project as I have for writing this book—because family is what I care the most about, as I imagine you do also.

Applying the 7 Habits material to the family is an absolute natural. It fits. In fact, it's where it was really learned. You'll sense this when you read the marvelous stories of how families of every kind share how they applied the 7 Habits and what resulted.

I'm also sharing a lot about me and our family—how we've tried to apply it and also how we've blown it. Every family situation is unique and different. So is ours. But in many ways every family is similar. My guess is that we struggle with many of the same kinds of problems and day-to-day challenges you do.

One of the personal dilemmas I have in writing the book is just how much to share of our family stories, mistakes, and achievements. On the one hand, I don't want to sound as if we think we have all the answers. On the other hand, I don't want to hold back from sharing where my heart is and where I have really learned the remarkable power of the 7 Habits.

I've asked Sandra and the children to share also—the good and the bad. Their stories are set off with their names in bold. Perhaps we've gone overboard; about a fifth of the stories are about us. But the stories are only illustrations of principles, which are universal. You may not relate to the stories, but I believe you will relate to the principles. And I hope the stories will trigger new ideas that work in your situation.

With all this material, I want, above all, to instill a sense of hope that this way of thinking can really be helpful and can work for you. I know you want to prioritize your family, and I want to share with you a powerful way of doing this in our crazy, turbulent, often family-unfriendly world.

Finally, I firmly believe that family is the building block of society and that our greatest fulfillment lies there. I also believe the most important work we will ever do is at home. Former First Lady Barbara Bush said it beautifully to the graduating students at Wellesley College: "As important as your obligations as a doctor, lawyer, or business leader will be, you are a human being first, and those human connections—with spouses, with children, with friends—are the most important investments you will ever make. At the end of your life, you will never regret not having passed one more test, not winning one more verdict, or not closing one more deal. You will regret time not spent with a husband, a child, a friend, or a parent. . . . Our success as a society depends not on what happens in the White House but on what happens inside your house."¹

I am convinced that if we as a society work diligently in every other area of life and neglect the family, it would be analogous to straightening deck chairs on the *Titanic* .

Sincerely,

Stephen R. Covey

ABOUT **F**RANKLIN **C**OVEY

Stephen R. Covey is co-chairman of Franklin Covey Company, a four-thousand-member international firm devoted to helping individuals, organizations, and families become more effective through the application of proven principles or natural laws. In addition to working with and creating products for individuals and families, the company's client portfolio includes eighty-two of the Fortune 100 companies, more than two-thirds of the Fortune 500 companies, thousands of small and midsize companies, and government entities at local, state, and national levels. Franklin Covey has also created pilot partnerships

with cities seeking to become principle-centered communities, and is currently teaching the 7 Habits to teachers and administrators in more than three thousand school districts and universities nationwide and through statewide initiatives with education leaders in twenty-seven states.

The vision of Franklin Covey is to teach people to teach themselves and become independent of the company. They encourage organizations to be family friendly, and they teach skills and provide products to help people balance work and family life. To the timeless adage by Laotzu: "Give a man a fish and you feed him for a day; teach him how to fish and you feed him for a lifetime," they add: "Develop teachers of fishermen, and you lift all society." This empowerment process is carried out through programs conducted at facilities in the Rocky Mountains of Utah, custom consulting services, personal coaching, custom on-site training, and client-facilitated training, as well as through open enrollment workshops offered in over three hundred cities in North America and forty countries worldwide.

Franklin Covey has more than nineteen thousand licensed client facilitators teaching its curriculum within their organizations, and it trains in excess of 750,000 participants annually. Implementation tools, including the Franklin Day Planner, the 7 Habits Organizer, and a wide offering of audio- and videotapes, books, and computer software programs enable clients to retain and effectively utilize concepts and skills. These and other family products carefully selected and endorsed by Franklin Covey are available in more than 120 Franklin Covey 7 Habits Stores throughout North America and in several other countries.

Franklin Covey products and materials are now available in twenty-eight languages, and their planner products are used by more than fifteen million individuals worldwide. The company has over fifteen million books in print, with more than one and a half million sold each year. *Business Week* lists Dr. Covey's *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People* as a number one best-selling trade business book of the year and its *First Things First* time management book as a number three.

For information on the Franklin Covey 7 Habits Store or International Office closest to you, or for a free catalog of Franklin Covey products and programs, call or write:

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ABOUT THE **A**UTHOR

Stephen R. Covey, husband, father, and grandfather, is an internationally respected leadership authority, family expert, teacher, organizational consultant, founder of the former Covey Leadership Center, and co-chairman of Franklin Covey Company. He has made teaching Principle-Centered Living and Principle-Centered Leadership his life's work. He holds an MBA from Harvard and a doctorate from Brigham Young University, where he was a professor of organizational behavior and business management, and also served as director of university relations and assistant to the president. For more than thirty years he has taught millions of individuals and families and leaders in business, education, and government the transforming power of principles or natural laws that govern human and organizational effectiveness.

Dr. Covey is the author of several acclaimed books including *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People*, which has been at the top of the best-seller lists for over seven years. More than ten million copies have been sold in twenty-eight languages and seventy countries. His books *Principle-Centered Leadership* and *First Things First* are two of the best-selling business books of the decade.

Dr. Covey and other Franklin Covey authors, speakers, and spokespersons, all authorities on leadership and effectiveness, are consistently sought by radio and television stations, magazines, and newspapers throughout the world.

Among recent acknowledgments, Dr. Covey has received the Thomas More College Medallion for continuing service to humanity, the Toastmaster's International Top Speaker Award, *Inc.* magazine's National Entrepreneur of the Year Lifetime Achievement Award for Entrepreneurial Leadership, and several honorary doctorates. He has also been recognized as one of *Time* magazine's twenty-five most influential Americans.

Stephen, his wife, Sandra, and their family live in the Rocky Mountains of Utah.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This book is truly the synergistic product of a team of people. Without their tireless, wholehearted, unique contributions it never would have come about. Each of their names could easily be listed on the cover alongside mine, and I express my deep appreciation to them:

—my beloved wife, Sandra, for many of the ideas and stories in this book, for her constant support and encouragement, for her intuitive wisdom and her education in child development, and above all for her sacrificial dedication over four decades in raising nine marvelous children.

—my dear children Cynthia, Maria, Stephen, Sean, David, Catherine, Colleen, Jenny, and Joshua, and their spouses and children, for their revealing and often embarrassing stories and for the quality of their lives and contributions.

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—my dear brother, John M. R. Covey, for his lifelong loyalty and friendship, his inspiration to me in the development of the ideas in this book, his gifted ability to model and present these family principles, and his excellent work as a content leader in Franklin Covey Company's home and family area. He is also my personal spokesman for this family material. Also to his wife, Jane, a wonderful mother of a lovely family, whose early work on the book team and contributions of stories and learnings from presenting this material have been invaluable.

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—the spouses and children of the book team members whose constancy of support, encouragement, patience, and belief have sustained and lifted us all.

—my parents, my three sisters, Irene, Helen Jean, and Marilyn, and my brother, John, for contributing to my happy childhood.

And, finally, I express my appreciation for the goodness of an overriding Providence in my life.

Franklin Covey Co.

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For all children, our common mission

FOREWORD

At the conclusion of our son's basketball tournament, I visited with one of the mothers. She said, "I'm surprised that your husband has been here for almost every game Joshua has played. I know he's on the run—writing, consulting, traveling. How has he managed?" The first thought that flashed into my mind was that he has a great wife and a full-time assistant. But putting that aside, I replied, "He makes it a priority." And he does.

Stephen once told a group of high-powered businessmen, "If your company were falling apart, you know you'd do whatever you had to do to save it. Somehow you'd find a way. The same reasoning applies to your family." Most of us know what we need to do, but do we want to do it?

Stephen and I both had happy childhoods and wanted the same for our children. Life was much simpler then. I still remember the long summer evenings as a child playing night games with all the neighborhood children: kick the can; hide-and-seek; red rover, red rover; run, sheepie, run. Our parents watched us from lawn chairs or sat on their porches, chatting and visiting. Often, my mom and dad walked hand in hand to Fernwood's Ice Cream Parlor to get a double-decker cone. As children we took time to lie on the cool green grass and watch the clouds make pictures in the sky. Sometimes we slept outside on summer nights, after gazing in wonder at the billions of stars in the Milky Way. This was the picture in my mind, the ideal of a happy, secure family.

Stephen and I often discussed the kind of home and family life we wanted to create. As our family grew and our lives became busier and more complicated, we realized that successful families don't just happen. It takes every bit of combined energy, talent, desire, vision, and determination you can muster. Things you really care about take time, thought, planning, and prioritizing. You have to work at it and make sacrifices; you have to want it and pay the price.

People have often remarked to me, "You have nine kids. How wonderful. You must be patient." I never could follow that line of reasoning. Why would I be patient because I had nine kids? Why wouldn't I be a raving maniac? Or they'd say, "If you have that many kids, I guess one more doesn't matter." They say that because they never had one more.

Raising a large family has been hard work. I wanted life to be simple, the way I had remembered my own childhood, but Stephen kept reminding me that our life together would never be like that. It was more complicated. There was more pressure. The world has changed. Those days are gone—but they can still be remembered and treasured.

As Stephen was building his reputation as a consultant, speaker, and author, he had to travel a lot. This meant planning ahead so as not to miss important events such as football games, school productions, and junior proms. Whenever he was gone, he would call nightly to talk to each child and touch base.

"Somebody get the phone," you'd hear. "You know it's going to be Dad again. I talked to him last night. It's your turn!" "Oh, brother! Tell him to call back when the movie is over." "Is there no respect?" we'd ask.

When he was home, he was totally there. He was so much a part of their lives and so involved that I don't think anyone remembers his being gone. Stephen has always been a great listener, a continual learner, and a perpetual student. He's always asking questions—picking people's brains as if he's devouring the last of a Thanksgiving turkey, hoping to hear opinions different from his own. He values the differences. I admire him for trying to walk his talk. He truly tries to live all the principles he teaches and believes in. This is not easy to do. He is a man without guile. He has an uncommon sense of humility that touches, changes, and softens his heart, thus making me want to do likewise.

He is an idealist (which is a blessing and a curse). His idealism inspires and motivates me, the people he teaches, and our children; it makes us want to achieve and lift ourselves and others. He is also a struggler, as I am (and as most of us are).

When we're trying to live what we believe, struggling but moving in the right direction, our children will usually accept our values. Our hearts and intentions are good—we have the vision and desire—but we often blow it. Our temper can put us in a compromised situation, and our pride can keep us there. We often get off track, but we keep coming back.

I remember an experience I had when our oldest daughter, Cynthia, was three years old. We had just moved into our first house—a tiny, new, three-bedroom tract house that we were crazy about. I loved decorating and worked hard to make it charming and attractive.

My literary club was meeting there, and I had spent hours cleaning so that every room looked perfect. I was anxious to show my friends around, hoping they would be impressed. I put Cynthia down for the night and thought she would be sleeping when they peeked in to see her—noticing, of course, her darling room with the bright yellow tied quilt and matching curtains and the cute, colorful animals I had made and hung on the walls. But when I opened her door to show off my daughter and her room, I discovered to my dismay that she had hopped out of bed, pulled all of her toys out of her toy chest, and scattered them all over the floor. She had emptied the clothes from her dresser drawers and thrown them all over the floor. She had dumped out her Tinker Toys, puzzles, and crayon box—and she was still going at it! Her room was a disaster. It looked as if a tornado had hit it. In the midst of all this, she looked up with a mischievous smile on her face and said sweetly, “Hi, Mummy!”

I was furious that she had disobeyed me and gotten out of bed; I was upset that her room was all messed up and that no one could see how cute it was decorated; and I was annoyed that she had put me in this embarrassing situation in front of my friends.

I spoke sharply to her, spontaneously spanked her little bottom, and put her back to bed with a warning not to get up again. Her lower lip started to quiver. She looked shocked at my response, and her eyes filled with tears. She started sobbing, not understanding what she had done wrong.

I closed the door and immediately felt terrible for overreacting. I was ashamed at my behavior, realizing that it was my pride—not her actions—that had set me off. I was angry at myself for such an immature response and shallowness. I was sure I had ruined her for life. Years later I asked her if she remembered the incident, and I breathed a sigh of relief when she said no.

Faced with the same situation today, I think my response would be to laugh. “That’s easy for you to say!” my daughters respond as they struggle with their toddlers. But what once seemed important to me has shifted and matured.

We all go through stages. Concern about appearances, making good impressions, being popular, comparing yourself to others, having unbridled ambition, wanting to make money, striving to be recognized and noticed, and trying to establish yourself—all fade as your responsibilities and character grow.

Life’s tests refine you. Genuine friendships sustain you. Being unaffected and genuine, having integrity, and facing problems squarely help as you try to reach out, make a difference, touch a life, be an example, do the right thing. You become motivated as you struggle to become a better person.

The struggles are ongoing. After raising nine kids, I think I’m just beginning to get some perspective.

Many times I blew it, lost my temper, misunderstood, judged before understanding, didn't listen, and acted unwisely. But I also tried to learn from my mistakes. I apologized, grew up, shifted my values, recognized growth stages, didn't overreact, rolled with the punches, learned to laugh at myself, had fewer rules, enjoyed life more, and realized that raising kids is hard work—physically and emotionally. It's draining as well as fulfilling. You fall into bed at night, totally exhausted, and like Scarlett O' Hara murmur, "Tomorrow is another day." Oh, to be half as smart as your child thinks you are and half as dumb as your teenager sees you!

Through it all I've learned that parenting is basically a life of sacrifice. I have a sign in my kitchen to remind me: "Motherhood is not for wimps." Along with your children you go through lessons and practicing, carpools and braces, tears and tantrums, ages and stages, traumas and triumphs, homework, table manners, puberty, pimples, puppy love, driver's licenses, fighting, and teasing.

But in the end (as in childbirth) you don't remember the pain. You remember the joy of being a parent, of worrying and sacrificing for that remarkable son or daughter you love with all your soul. You remember the expressions on your children's faces through the years—how they looked in that special dress or outfit they wore. You remember your pride in their success, your pain in their struggles. You remember the wonderful times, the fun of it all, the quiet moments of bonding as you gazed at the baby you were nursing, filled with the awe and wonder of your stewardship and your fulfillment in being a parent and nurturing a family.

It wasn't until we had our seventh baby, Colleen, that I felt as though I was really putting it all together. I finally learned how to say no to the unimportant. As I sat in my rocking chair, looking out the window, nursing, bonding, glad to be there, savoring the moment rather than thinking I should be doing something else, a sense of joy and balance filled me. Finally I knew that for me this is what it was all about.

So I only remember the good times. But then, only seven of our children are married. We still have two at home. And Joshua, our seventeen-year-old high school junior, often reminds me (with a twinkle in his eye), "We could ruin you guys!"

Each of you has a very different and very personal family life, one that is unlike anyone else's. You've probably discovered, as I did, that life isn't simple anymore. Society doesn't support families as it used to. Life is more technological, faster, more sophisticated, scarier.

The theories and principles put forth in this book were not invented by Stephen. He noticed them, observed them, put them together in some workable order. These are universal principles that you already know in your heart to be true. That's why they seem so familiar. You've seen them in action. They've worked in your own life. You've even used them yourself—often.

What is helpful, however, is giving you a framework, a way of thinking about and looking at your own unique situation and finding a way to deal with it. It's a starting point, a way to examine where you are right now and where you want to go, and ways that might help you get there.

A few years ago Carol, one of my best and dearest friends, developed cancer. After months of radiation, chemotherapy, and operations, she realized what her fate would be. She never asked, "Why me?" There was no bitterness or feeling of despair. Her whole perspective on life changed dramatically. "I don't have any time for things that don't matter," she told me. "I know what's important and where to put my priorities." Her courage touched my heart as I watched her strengthen her relationship with her husband, children, and loved ones. Her utmost desire was to serve, contribute, and somehow make a difference. Her death made all of us who loved her want to become better and stronger people—more willing to love, care, and serve. In a sense she wrote her mission statement for life on her deathbed. You

can begin writing yours now.

No one will ever really understand your situation, your uniqueness—the rocks or baggage you carry or the idealism you hope for. You can take from this book what you will, what feels right for you. Some story or example might hit home and you'll be able to stand back, stand apart, and look at your own life and gain insight or perspective.

We want to give hope to those who feel they've made a lot of mistakes, blown it, or not prioritized their families and are feeling the repercussions of that decision—or even those who may have lost a child along the way. You can reclaim a lost child. It is never too late. You should never give up or stop trying.

I believe this book will help you become that agent of change, that transition person who will make a difference.

Every good wish in your efforts,

Sandra Merrill Covey

From Survival . . . to Stability . . . to Success . . . to Significance

1. Kurt Lewin, *Field Theory in Social Science* (New York: Harper, 1951), p. 183.
2. W. Edwards Deming, *Out of the Crisis* (Cambridge: Massachusetts Institute of Technology, 1982), pp. 66–67.
3. Urie Bronfenbrenner, as quoted in Susan Byrne's interview, "Nobody Home: The Erosion of the American Family," *Psychology Today*, May 1977, pp. 41–47. See also a study by E. E. Maccoby and J. A. Martin, "Socialization in the Context of the Family: Parent—Child Interaction," in P. H. Mussen (ed.), *Handbook of Child Psychology*, vol. 4 (New York: John Wiley, 1983), pp. 1–101.
4. Marianne Williamson, *A Return to Love* (New York: HarperCollins, 1992), p. 165.
5. *The Complete Poems and Plays of T. S. Eliot* (London: Faber and Faber, 1969), p. 197.
6. Albert E. N. Gray, "The Common Denominator of Success," a speech given at the Prudential Insurance Company of America (Newark, New Jersey, 1983).

F_{ROM}**S**_{URVIVAL}. . . **T**_O**S**_{TABILITY}. . . **T**_O**S**_{UCCESS}
. . . **T**_O**S**_{IGNIFICANCE}