

HABIT 6—SYNERGIZE

“THE ‘HIGH’ WAY.”

synergist, *n.* 2. One who or that which cooperates with another in the production of a certain effect. *Buck, Med. Handbook, I. 597.*
synergize (*sin'ér-jíz*), *v. i.*; pret. and pp. *synergized*, ppr. *synergizing*. [Gr. *συνεργός*, working together, + *-ize*.] To act as a synergist. See ***synergist**, 2. *Buck, Med. Handbook, II. 15.*

“ALONE we can do so little; TOGETHER we can do so much”—Helen Keller

Synergy happens when two or more people work together to create a better solution than one of those people could come up with alone. It's not your way or my way, but a better way, a higher way. Synergy isn't anything new; it's everywhere.

Synergy is. . .	Synergy is not. . .
Keeping promises	Breaking promises
Being happy that we're different	Just tolerating difference
Working in teams	Working alone
Being open-minded	Thinking you're always right
Thinking outside the box	Always coloring within the lines
Coming up with third alternatives	Compromising
Brainstorming	Insisting on only one right answer.

CELEBRATING DIFFERENCES

Diversity is a tough topic among teens. During my teenage years I was trying to blend in, not be different. But without diversity, life would be extremely boring. If everyone thought like you, looked like you, and acted like you, you could get a little sick of yourself. When you hear the word diversity, you typically think of racial and gender differences. But it also means differences in physical features, dress, language, wealth, family, religious beliefs, lifestyle, education, interests, skills, age, style and on and on. Since diversity is inevitable, you can take three possible approaches: Shun diversity, tolerate diversity, or celebrate diversity. When you celebrate diversity, you want to cooperate with others to achieve your goal.

RESPECT DIFFERING VIEWPOINTS

It's much easier to work with others when you appreciate their differences. Once you understand that everyone views the world differently and that everyone can be right, you have more respect for differing viewpoints.

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"I once complained to my father that I didn't seem to be able to do things the same way other people did. Dad's advice? 'MARGO, don't be a sheep. PEOPLE hate sheep. They eat sheep.'" — Margo Kaufman

Legend

- 4—Best describes you (you are exactly like this).
- 3—Mostly describes you (you are kind of like this).
- 2—Hardly describes you (you're not really like this).
- 1—Least describes you (you are nothing like this).

Example

Imaginative	2	Investigative	4	Realistic	1	Analytical	3
COLUMN 1		COLUMN 2		COLUMN 3		COLUMN 4	
Imaginative		Investigative		Realistic		Analytical	
Adaptable		Inquisitive		Organized		Critical	
Relating		Creating		Getting to point		Debating	
Personal		Adventurous		Practical		Academic	
Flexible		Inventive		Precise		Systematic	
Sharing		Independent		Orderly		Sensible	
Cooperative		Competitive		Perfectionistic		Logical	
Sensitive		Risk-taking		Hard-working		Intellectual	
People-person		Problem solver		Planner		Reader	
Associate		Originate		Memorize		Think through	
Spontaneous		Changer		Wants direction		Judger	
Communicating		Discovering		Cautious		Reasoning	
Caring		Challenging		Practicing		Examining	
Feeling		Experimenting		Doing		Thinking	
COLUMN 1 TOTAL		COLUMN 2 TOTAL		COLUMN 3 TOTAL		COLUMN 4 TOTAL	

RANK YOUR CHARACTER TRAITS

Assess your styles, traits, and characteristics by completing the table on the next page. Look at the four terms in each row and rank them from 1 to 4, with 4 next to the word that best describes you.

WE ARE ALL A MINORITY OF ONE

Because each person is unique, you are truly a minority of one. No one person looks, talks, or even things the same as you do. Habit 6 reminds you that diversity isn't just an external think. It is also internal. You learn differently; you see differently; and you have different styles, traits, and characteristics. Your brain doesn't work the same as your sister's or your friend's.

"GREETINGS. I AM PLEASED TO SEE THAT WE ARE DIFFERENT. MAY WE TOGETHER BECOME GREATER THAN THE SUM OF US BOTH." — Mr. Spock

HABIT 6—SYNERGIZE NOTICE THE DIFFERENCES

Do you know what it means to be a minority of one? No one else is in the minority with you, not even if they look similar to you or have the same background as you. Even if you had an identical twin, you would still be a minority of one. Once you look beyond the surface, you will find amazing differences that make everyone unique.

“The smallest minority on earth is the **INDIVIDUAL**.” —Ayn Rand

CELEBRATE YOUR OWN DIVERSITY

Comparing yourself to others is easy. After all, you see other people more than you see yourself. However, when you compare yourself to another person, you neglect to recognize the beauty of your uniqueness. Instead of trying to blend in and be like everyone else, you should be proud of and celebrate your unique differences and qualities. A fruit salad is delicious precisely because each fruit maintains its own flavor.

Avoid Roadblocks to Celebrating Diversity

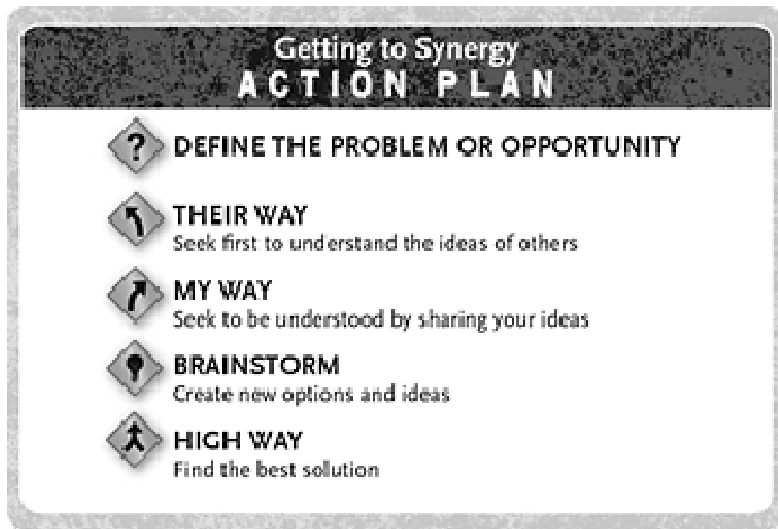
Although celebrating differences has many roadblocks, three of the largest are:

- Ignorance: Not knowing how other people think, what they believe, or how they feel
- Cliques: Wanting to be with those you're comfortable with, which isn't wrong, but it becomes a problem when that group becomes exclusive and rejects others
- Prejudice: Not treating people fairly, which includes stereotyping, labeling, or prejudging others because they differ from your own circumstances

FINDING THE 'HIGH' WAY

Once you've bought into the idea that differences are a strength and not a weakness, and you've committed to celebrate differences, you're ready to find the High Way — synergy. It's not your way or my way, but a better way — a higher way. Our Founding Fathers found the High Way as they formed the structure of the U.S. government. William Paterson proposed the New Jersey Plan that favored the smaller states. James Madison offered the Virginia Plan that favored the larger states.

The result? The Connecticut Compromise, often called the Great Compromise, formed two chambers of Congress — the House and Senate — and satisfied the desires of both the smaller and larger states. However, it should be called the Great Synergy, since it proved to be better than either of the original proposals.



HABIT 6—SYNERGIZE

Baby Steps Choose one or two baby steps you can do to synergize

1. When you meet a classmate or neighbor with a disability or impairment, don't feel sorry for them or avoid them because you don't know what to say. Instead, go out of your way to get acquainted.
2. The next time you are having a disagreement with a parent, try getting out the getting to synergy action plan.
3. Share a personal problem with an adult you trust. See if the exchanging of viewpoints leads to new insights and ideas about your problem.
4. This week, look around and notice how much synergy is going on all around you, such as two hands working together, teamwork, symbiotic relationships in nature, and creative problem solving.
5. Think about someone who irritates you. What is different about them? What can you learn from them?
6. Brainstorm with your friends and come up with something fun, new, and different to do this weekend, instead of doing the same old thing again and again.

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**WE ARE SO MUCH MORE THAN
THE SUM OF OUR PARTS. WE ARE
ADDED, SUBTRACTED
MULTIPLIED, DIVIDED,
IN INFINITE VARIATIONS.
WE ARE CREATED AGAIN WITH EVERY
THOUGHT, EXPERIENCE,
MEMORY AND EMOTION.**

That equation takes more than a mind to understand, it takes heart and soul.

-synergy-

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