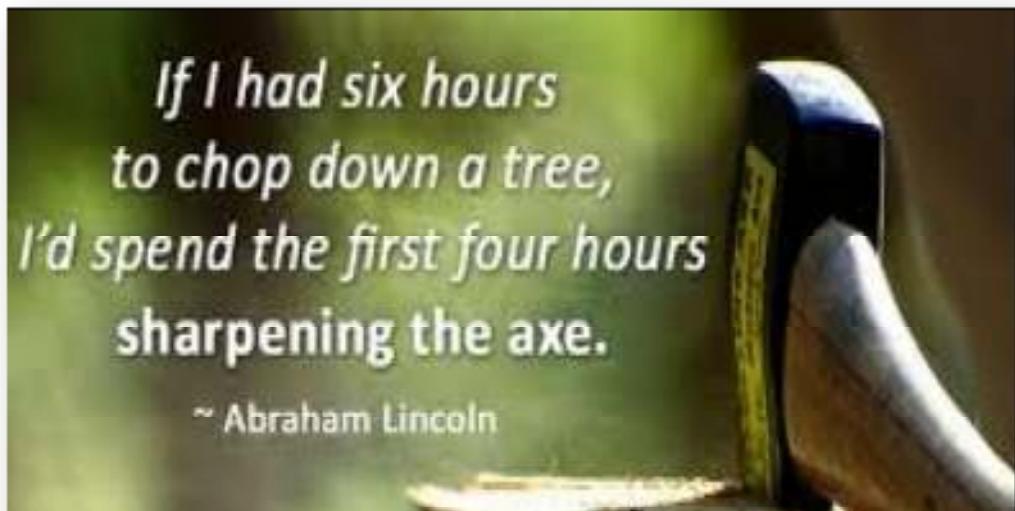


HABIT 7—SHARPEN THE SAW

“It's me time.”



*If I had six hours
to chop down a tree,
I'd spend the first four hours
sharpening the axe.*

~ Abraham Lincoln

Habit 7: Sharpen the Saw is about balanced renewal in all four dimensions of human need: physical, mental, social/emotional, and spiritual. As you renew yourself in each of the four areas, you create growth and change in your life. You increase your capacity to produce and handle the challenges around you. When you don't renew yourself, you limit or even reverse your growth and limit or decrease your capacity to produce and your ability to handle challenges.

So you're thinking "I don't have time to Sharpen the Saw." How can Sharpening the Saw increase capacity? Think about it: It takes thirty minutes to cut a log with a dull saw. It takes five minutes to sharpen a saw and it takes ten minutes to cut the log with a sharp saw. *Ka-Ching!* You just saved yourself fifteen minutes. The same applies to your own tasks.

BALANCE IS BETTER

You need to keep your personal self sharp so you can better deal with life. To perform at your peak, you need to pay attention to all four dimensions. Balancing them is important because what you do in one dimension of life will affect the other three. Think about it. If one of your car's tires is out of balance, all four tires will wear unevenly, not just one. It's hard to be friendly (heart) when you're exhausted (body). It also works the other way. When you're feeling motivated and in tune with yourself (soul), it's easier to focus on your studies (mind) and be more friendly (heart).

TAKE TIME FOR A TIMEOUT

Like a car, you need regular tune-ups and oil changes. You need time to rejuvenate and rest. You need time to relax and unstring your bow. Treat yourself to a little pampering — that is what sharpening the saw is all about.

"Within you is a stillness and a sanctuary to which you can retreat at any time and be yourself." —Hermann Hesse

HABIT 7—SHARPEN THE SAW

CARE FOR YOUR BODY

This ever changing body of yours is really quite a marvelous machine. You can handle it with care, or you can abuse it. You can control it, or let it control you. In short, your body is a tool and if you take good care of it, it will serve you well.

Focus on how you feel, not on how you look: In your quest for a better physique, make sure you don't get too obsessed with your appearance. Before you start comparing yourself to the models on the covers of magazines and begin hating everything about your body and looks, remember that thousands of healthy and happy teens don't have high cheekbones or rock-hard abs. In fact, many successful singers, talk show hosts, dancers, athletes, actors, and actresses have all kinds of physical imperfections but are still admired and successful. The important think is feeling good physically – not so much looking good physically.

Food Guide Pyramid
Relative servings per day for each Food Group



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Adaptation based on the Food Guide Pyramid offered by the USDA and DHHS

Paste Up Great Personalities!

SHARPEN YOUR MIND

Develop brain power through your schooling, extracurricular activities, hobbies, jobs and other mind-enlarging experiences. An educated mind is much more than a diploma on a wall, even though that's an important part of it. An educated mind is like a well-conditioned ballerina. Ready to stretch and bend at her command. Mental stimulation comes from a wide variety of sources – fiction art, educational TV, puzzles, and games can be about stretching yourself mentally as well.

CARE FOR YOUR HEART

Do you ever feel as if you're riding an emotional roller coaster – up one day and down the next? Your heart is temperamental. And it needs constant nourishment and care, just like your body. The best way to nourish your heart is to nourish relationships – both with yourself and with another. If you approach life this way, you'll be amazed at how much happiness you can give others and find for yourself. Meaningful relationships are not like mold accumulating on the cheddar cheese in your fridge. They require conscious effort.

Laugh or you'll cry: After all is said and done, there is one key ingredient to keeping your heart healthy and strong. Just laugh, loud and long and clear (Isn't that what Mary Poppins said?) Did you know that by the time you reach kindergarten, you laugh about three hundred times a day? In contrast, the typical adult laughs a measly seventeen times a day. Where are you? Three hundred times a day or seventeen? Laughter also promotes good health and speedy recoveries, so it's not just good for your heart – it's good for your body! If you're not laughing much now, do

6		1	8	2	3
	2		4		9
8	3		5	4	
5	4	6	7		9
	3				5
7		8	3	1	2
	1	7		9	6
	8		3		2
3	2	9	4		5

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something about it. Start a humor collection – collect funny stories, funny movies, and jokes. Remember to never let your laughter become unkind or at the expense of others. Learn to laugh at yourself when strange things happen to you or when you do something kind of stupid.

CARE FOR YOUR MIND

Your soul is your center. In your soul lies your deepest convictions and values. It is the source for purpose, meaning, and inner peace. Sharpening the saw in the spiritual area of life means taking time to renew and awaken that inner self. Your soul is a very private area of your life. You can feed it in many ways. Some ideas include: meditating, listening to inspirational music, serving others, praying, and being in nature.

“BALANCE IS THE KEY TO SUCCESS IN ALL THINGS. DO NOT NEGLECT YOUR MIND, BODY, OR SPIRIT. INVEST TIME AND ENERGY IN ALL OF THEM EQUALLY – IT WILL BE THE BEST INVESTMENT YOU EVER MAKE, NOT JUST FOR YOUR LIFE BUT FOR WHATEVER IS TO FOLLOW.”

— Ayn Rand

Baby Steps Choose one or two baby steps you can do to sharpen the saw.

Body

1. Eat breakfast.
2. Start an exercise program today and do it faithfully for 30 days. Walk, run, swim, bike, rollerblade, lift weights, etc. Choose something you really enjoy.
3. Give up a bad habit for a week. Go without soda, fried foods, donuts, chocolate, or whatever else may be hurting your body. A week later, see how you feel.

Mind

4. Subscribe to a magazine that has some educational value, such as *Popular Mechanics* or *National Geographic*.
5. Read a newspaper every day. Pay special attention to the headline stories and the opinions page.
6. The next time you go on a date, visit a museum or eat at an ethnic restaurant you've never been to before. Expand your horizons.

Heart

7. Go on a one-on-one outing with a family member like your mom or your brother. Catch a ball game, see a movie, go shopping, or get an ice cream.
8. Begin today to build your humor collection. Cut out your favorite cartoons, buy hilarious movies, or start your own collection of great jokes. In no time, you'll have something to go to when you're feeling stressed.

Soul

9. Watch the sunset tonight or get up early to watch the sunrise.
10. If you haven't done it, start keeping a journal today.
11. Take time each day to meditate, reflect upon your life, or pray. Do what works for you.

Sources:

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