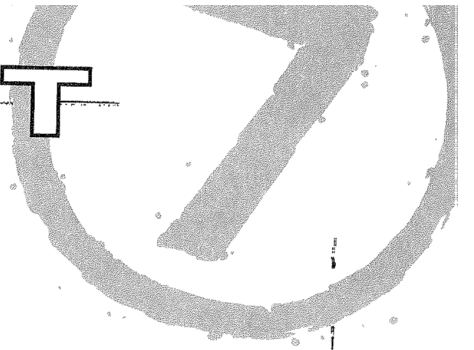


H A B I T



# Sharpen the Saw



It's  
"Me Time"

# The time to repair the roof is when the sun is shining.

U.S. PRESIDENT JOHN F. KENNEDY

Do you ever feel imbalanced, stressed-out, or empty inside? If so, you're going to love Habit 7, because it was specially designed to help you deal with these problems. Why do we call it "Sharpen the Saw"? Well, imagine that you're going for a walk in the forest when you come upon a guy furiously sawing down a tree.

"What are you doing?" you ask.

"I'm sawing down a tree," comes the curt reply.

"How long have you been at it?"

"Four hours so far, but I'm really making progress," he says, sweat dripping from his chin.

"Your saw looks really dull," you say. "Why don't you take a break and sharpen it?"

"I can't, you idiot. I'm too busy sawing."

We all know who the real idiot here is, now, don't we? If the guy were to take a fifteen-minute break to sharpen the saw, he'd probably finish three times faster.

Have you ever been too busy driving to take time to get gas?

Have you ever been too busy living to take time to renew yourself?

Habit 7 is all about keeping your personal self sharp so that you can better deal with life. It means regularly renewing and strengthening the four key dimensions of your life—your body, your brain, your heart, and your soul.

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**BODY**



***The Physical Dimension***

*Exercise, eat healthy, sleep well, relax.*

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**BRAIN**



***The Mental Dimension***

*Read, educate, write, learn new skills.*

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**HEART**



***The Emotional Dimension***

*Build relationships (RBA, PBA), give service, laugh.*

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**SOUL**



***The Spiritual Dimension***

*Meditate, keep a journal, pray, take in quality media.*

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## ● **BALANCE IS BETTER**

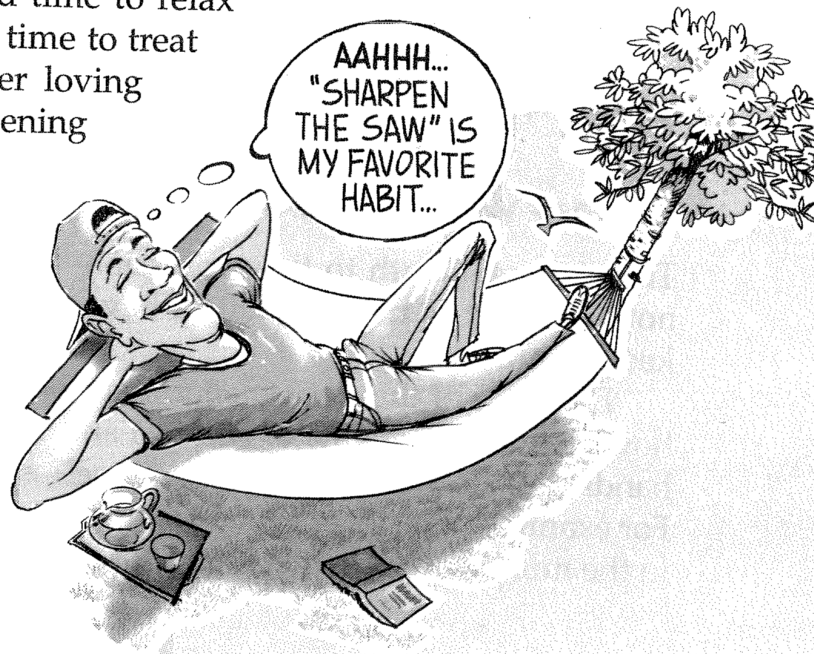
The ancient Greeks' famous saying "Nothing overmuch" reminds us of the importance of balance and of keeping in touch with all four dimensions of life. Some people spend countless hours building the perfect body but neglect their minds. Others have minds that can bench-press 400 pounds but let their bodies waste away or forget about having a social life. To perform at your peak, you need to strive for balance in all four areas.

Why is balance so important? It's because how 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 the 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 to be more friendly (heart).

During my school years, I remember studying many of the great artists, authors, and musicians, like Mozart, van Gogh, Beethoven, and Hemingway. So many of them seemed to be emotionally messed up. Why? Your guess is as good as mine, but I think it was because they were out of balance. It seems they focused so hard on just one thing, like their music or art, that they neglected the other dimensions of life and lost their bearings. As the saying goes, *Balance and moderation in all things.*

## ● **TAKE TIME FOR A TIME-OUT**

Just like a car, you too need regular tune-ups and oil changes. You need time out to rejuvenate the best thing you've got going for yourself—you! You need time to relax and unstring your bow, time to treat yourself to a little tender loving care. This is what sharpening the saw is all about.



## You Can Do It

**Y**ou're probably already doing a lot of saw sharpening without even knowing it. If you're working hard at school, you're sharpening your mind. If you're into athletics or fitness, you're caring for your body. If you're working to develop friendships, you're nourishing your heart. Often you can sharpen the saw in more than one area at once. Melanie once told me how, for her, horseback riding did this. The physical nature of riding exercised her body. Thinking deeply while riding exercised her mind. And being in nature nurtured her soul. I then asked her, "What about relationships? How does riding develop your heart?" She said, "I get closer to my horse." Well, I guess horses can be people too.

Sharpening the saw won't just happen to you. Since it's a Quadrant 2 activity (important but not urgent), you have to be proactive and happen to it. The best thing to do is to take out time each day to sharpen the saw, even if it's only for fifteen or thirty minutes. Some teens set apart a specific time each day—early in the morning, after school, or late at night—to be alone, to think, or to exercise. Others like to do it on the weekends. There's no one right way—so find what works for you.

Abraham Lincoln was once asked, "What would you do if you had eight hours to cut down a tree?" He replied, "I'd spend the first four hours sharpening my saw."

