



EP 7 Habits Advisory Program

Handbook for Habit 7

**Adapted from The Leader in Me Activity Guide
and The 7 Habits of Highly Effective Teens*

Student Name:

Advisory Teacher:

This packet should be read by:

Habit Seven: Sharpen the Saw

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," come the curt reply.

"How long have you been at it?"

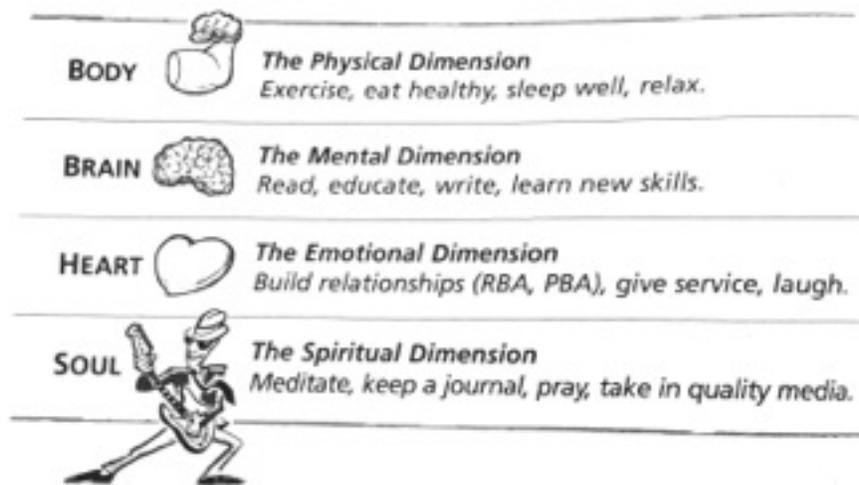
"Four hours so far, but I'm really making progress," he says, sweat dripping from his chin.

"Your saw looks 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 that 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 on your phone to take time to charge it? 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.



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).

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.



Caring for Your Body

During your teenage years, your voice will change, your hormones will run rampant, and curves and muscles will begin springing up all over. Welcome to your new body!

Actually, this ever changing body of yours is really quite a remarkable 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.

Here is a list of ten ways teens can keep their physical selves sharp:

1. Eat good food
2. Relax in the bathtub
3. Bike
4. Lift weights
5. Get enough sleep
6. Practice yoga
7. Play sports
8. Take walks
9. Stretch out
10. Do an aerobic workout

The four key ingredients to a healthy body are good sleeping habits, physical relaxation, good nutrition, and proper exercise.

Be careful though. If your quest is for a better physique, make sure you don't get too obsessed with your appearance. As you've probably noticed, our society is hung up on "looks." Just walk into any store and glance at the perfect people who are on the covers of nearly every magazine. It kind of makes you feel self-conscious about all your physical imperfections, doesn't it?

Before you start comparing yourself to the babes and hunks on the covers of magazines and begin hating everything about your body and looks, please remember there are thousands of healthy and happy teens who don't have high cheekbones, rock-hard abs, or buns of steel. There are many successful singers, talk show hosts, dancers, athletes, and actors who have physical imperfections of all kinds. The important thing is feeling good physically, and not so much your appearance. You have to change your perception. It's not about your weight, it's about caring for yourself on a daily basis.

Besides, if you didn't already know it, what you see on the covers of magazines isn't real. They're images that have been retouched, cropped, and altered. Retouchers charge thousands of dollars to alter photos of stars for magazines. They might clean up the complexion, soften a smile line, trim a chin or arm to make it appear smaller, soften a line under the earlobe, add hair, soften neck muscles, or add forehead to create a better line. These alterations happen to EVERY photo you see published in a magazine. No model or famous person is exempt. Comparing yourself isn't fair, because the people in the photo don't even look that good in real life!



Caring for Your Brain

There are numerous ways to expand your mind. However, the best approach may simply be to read. As the saying goes, reading is to the mind what exercise is to the body. Reading is a foundational to everything else and doesn't cost that much, unlike other methods, such as traveling. The following are twenty possible ways to sharpen your mind. I'm sure you can come up with another fifty if you try.

Read a newspaper every day	Write a story, a poem, or song
Subscribe to <i>National Geographic</i>	Play challenging board games
Travel	Debate
Plant a garden	Play a game of chess
Observe wildlife	Visit a museum
Attend a lecture on an interesting topic	Comment in class
Watch the Discovery Channel	Attend a ballet, opera, or play
Visit a library	Learn to play a musical instrument
Listen to the news	Have stimulating conversations with friends
Research your ancestors	Solve crossword puzzles

As you attempt to build your brain, you will need to overcome a few barriers. Here are three to consider:

Screentime. Screentime is any time spent in front of a screen, like a TV, computer, video game, iPad, phone, or movie screen. *Some* time can be healthy, but *too much* time chatting on the Web, playing games, or watching TV can numb your mind. Did you know that the average teen watches over twenty hours of TV a week? That equates to forty-three days annually and a total of eight years over a lifetime. Just think what you could do with those forty-three days each year if you were to spend them doing something productive like studying French, ballroom dancing, or computer programming.

Set guidelines for yourself regarding screen time, and don't let it get out of hand. Or try losing your remote control. That works too.

The Nerd Syndrome. Interestingly, some teens don't want to do too well in school because other might think they're too studious (nerds), and studious isn't cool. I've also heard girls say that they don't want to come across as "brains" because it intimidates guys. What will we think of next, for crying out loud?! If having a mind intimidates someone, that probably tells you something about their own lack of neurons. Take pride in your mental abilities and the fact that you value education. There are lots of wealthy and successful people who were once considered nerds.

Pressure. Sometimes we're scared of doing well in school because of the high expectations it creates. If we bring home a good report card and get praised for it, we've suddenly established the expectation that we'll do it again and again. And the pressure builds. If we do poorly, there's no expectation and no pressure.

Just remember this: The stress that results from success is much more tolerable than the regret that results from not trying your best. Don't sweat the pressure. You can deal with it.



Caring for Your Heart

The best way to sharpen the saw and nourish your heart is to focus on building relationships, or in other words, to make regular deposits into your relationship bank accounts and into your own personal bank account. Let's review what those deposits are.

<u>RBA (Relationship Bank Account)</u>	<u>PBA (Personal Bank Account)</u>
Keep promises	Keep promises to yourself
Do small acts of kindness	Do small acts of kindness
Be loyal	Be gentle with yourself
Listen	Be honest
Say you're sorry	Renew yourself
Set clear expectations	Tap into your talents

I like how Mother Teresa put it: "Let no one ever come to you without leaving better and happier. Be the living expression of [kindness]: kindness in your face, kindness in your eyes, kindness in your smile." If you approach life this way, always looking for ways to build instead of tear down, you'll be amazed at how much happiness you can give to others and find for yourself.

After all is said and done, there is one last key to keeping your heart healthy and strong. Just laugh. That's right ...laugh. *Hakuna matata!* Don't worry, be happy! Sometimes life just stinks and there's not much you can do to change it, so you just might as well laugh.

It's too bad that as we age we tend to forget what made childhood so magical. One study showed that by the time you reach kindergarten, you laugh 300 times a day. In contrast, the typical adults laughs a whimsy 17 times a day! No wonder children are so much happier! Why are we so serious? Maybe it's because we've been taught that laughing too much is childish. To quote the great Jedi master, Yoda, "You must unlearn what you have learned." We must learn to laugh again.

I read the most fascinating article by Peter Dinklage about the power of humor in *Psychology Today*. These were some of his key findings about laughter:

- It loosens up the mental gears and helps us think more creatively
- Helps us cope with the difficulties of life
- Reduces stress levels
- Relaxes us as it lowers our heart rate and blood pressure
- Connects us with others and counteracts feelings of alienation, a major factor in depression and suicide
- Releases endorphins, the brain's natural painkillers

Learn to laugh at yourself when strange or stupid things happen to you, because they will. As someone once said, "One of the best things people can have up their sleeve is a good funny bone."



Caring for Your Soul

What is it that moves your soul? A great movie? A good book? Have you ever seen a movie that made you cry? What was it that got to you? What deeply inspires you? Does music? Art? Being in nature?

By soul, I mean that inner self that lurks far below the surface of your everyday self. Your soul is your center, wherein lie your deepest convictions and values. It is the source for purpose, meaning, and inner peace. Sharpening the saw spiritually means taking time to renew and awaken that inner self. As the famous author Pearl S Buck wrote, "Inside myself is a place where I live all alone and that's where you renew your springs that never dry up."

As a teenager, I got strength from writing in my journal, listening to good music, and spending time alone in the mountains. This was my way of renewing my soul, although I didn't think of it that way at the time.

Your soul is a very private area of your life. Naturally, there are many different ways to feed it. Here are a few ideas shared by teens:

- Meditating
- Serving others
- Writing in my journal
- Going for a walk
- Reading inspiring books
- Drawing
- Writing poetry or music
- Thinking deeply
- Listening to uplifting music
- Playing a musical instrument
- Practicing a religion
- Talking to friends I can be myself with
- Reflecting on my goals or personal mission statement



You Can Do It

You're probably already doing a lot of saw sharpening without even knowing it. If you're working hard a school, you 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 horseback riding did this for her. 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 its only 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."

