

Jericho High School

"THE PARENT CORNER"

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

John F. Kennedy

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The 7 Habits of Happy Kids

Habit #5: Seek First To Understand, Then To Be Understood

Habit # 6: Synergize Habit

Habit # 7: Sharpen the Saw

The Parent Corner is a professional publication designed to provide Jericho parents with practical tools and effective strategies that will serve to strengthen family ties and protect our children from making unhealthy life choices.

As the school year comes to a close, the last three habits of Steven and Sean Covey's **7 Habits of Healthy Kids** may prove helpful to you and your family as summer approaches.

Summer for many is a time to replenish one's body, mind and spirit and experience life on less complicated terms. The following habits need no classroom, blackboard or boardroom, and can be practiced anywhere you and your family may travel.

HABIT #5: Seek First To Understand

Covey's suggests that Habits 5, 6 and 7 are best utilized if looked at not simply as a new set of techniques that you try once and then discard, but rather as a shift in your family communication style. The habits are about changing paradigms and changing the beliefs you may hold about parenting. Habit # 5 focuses on communication and the value of effective interaction between people.

Solution-focused therapist, Dr. Charles Murphy suggests that a good way for parents to establish and maintain relationships with their children is to approach them the same way an ambassador might approach a foreign country. Successful ambassadors maintain an open mind in order to learn as much as a possible about the people with whom they are visiting. When interacting with our children, parents might want to listen carefully and familiarize themselves with their child's culture to gain a better understanding of why they behave as they do. Understanding a culture lets one interact and impact change as warranted.

TOOLBOX SKILLS
★ Be Proactive
★ Begin with the End In Mind
★ Put First Things First
★ Think Win-Win
★ Seek First to Understand
★ Synergize
★ Sharpen The Saw



Reflection: Think of a person who did not respond to you as you would have liked. If you had traveled into his world, explored his perspective, his emotional culture and his motivation, would you have gained a better understanding of his position? How might this have helped you interact with this person?

HABIT #6: Synergize

Synergy is when two or more people work together to produce more than the sum of what they could produce separately. In other words, one plus one equals three or more. Covey suggests that when family members embrace a mutual problem-solving orientation based on the dynamics of love and cooperation, they can achieve greater harmony and happiness.

As a simple metaphor, the following story may prove useful:

A boy and his father are hungry for a healthy snack. They want to pick apples from a tree. The father can't quite reach them; the little boy can't even come close. The father hoists the boy on his shoulders. With outstretched arms, the boy grabs two apples. Together, they accomplished what neither could have done on their own.



Synergy in the family is about communication and cooperation. It is about trust and respect. It is about adaptability and flexibility. It is about identifying a common goal and pooling resources to achieve that goal in the best possible fashion.

SYNERGY IS...	SYNERGY IS NOT...
Keeping Promises	Breaking Promises
Being happy that we're different	Just tolerating differences
Working together	Working alone
Being open minded	Thinking you are always right
Coming up with Third Alternatives	Compromising
Brainstorming	Insisting on only one right answer

Reflection: Think of an upcoming family event. How might you work with members of your family to assure that the experience will be one where there is shared ownership and great success?



HABIT #7: Sharpening the Saw



Sharpening the Saw is all about keeping your personal self sharp so that you can better deal with life and all the wonderful challenges of parenthood. By taking good care of yourself, managing your time well and being the best role model possible, you enhance your capacity to parent your children.

Covey describes the following analogy to shed light on Habit #7. He tells of a man named Frank, who while walking in the forest comes upon a stranger furiously sawing down a tree. The following conversation ensues:

Frank: “What are doing?”

Stranger: “I’m sawing down a tree.”

Frank: “How long have you been at it?”

Stranger: “Six hours so far, but I’m really making progress” (Sweat drips from his chin.)

Frank: “Your saw looks really dull. Why don’t you take a break and sharpen it?”

Stranger: “I can’t, you silly man. I’m too busy sawing... I have to finish quickly so I can go home and see my family.”

Frank: “Well, I might suggest that if you would take a 15 minute break to sharpen the saw, you’d finish three times faster, and hence quicken your return home.”

Unfortunately, some people misunderstand Habit #7. If you’re overworking yourself and your blade is becoming dull, common wisdom says to take a break, maybe even go on vacation. However, that isn’t sharpening the saw — that’s putting the saw down. When you put down a dull blade for a while, the blade will still be dull when you pick it up again. Sharpening the saw then is actually an activity, just as the analogy suggests. Think about what it would mean to sharpen the saw of your life. Here are some saw-sharpening ideas taken from Steve Pavlina’s website, “Personal Development for Smart People” (<http://www.stevpavlina.com>).



1. Exercise
2. Improve your diet
3. Educate yourself (read, listen to audio programs, attend a seminar)
4. Learn a new skill
5. Meditate
6. Write in your journal
7. Have a deep conversation with someone
8. Set some new goals or review/update your old goals
9. Organize your home or office
10. Clear out a bunch of little tasks that you’ve been putting off



Reflection: Has there ever been a time when you have become overwhelmed by a large project? How might your taking the time to “sharpen your saw” have helped bring greater success to the outcome.

As I close this issue of The Parent Corner, and our discussions of Steven and Sean Covey’s *7 Habits for Healthy Kids*, it is my hope that these strategies were helpful to you. As these skills may be new tools for your family toolbox, please feel free to contact me at tbenjamin@jerichoschools.org with any questions.