

The Story of Two Woodcutters —Why You Should Sharpen Your Axes



Once upon a time, there were two woodcutters named Peter and John. They were often at loggerheads over who chopped more wood. So one day, they decided to hold a competition to determine the winner. The rules were simple—whoever produce the most wood in a day wins

So the next day morning, both of them took up their positions in the forest and started chopping away in their fastest possible speed. This lasted for an hour before Peter suddenly stopped. When John realized that there was no chopping sound from his opponent’s side, he thought: “Ah Ha! He must be tired already!” And he continued to cut down his trees with double the pace.

A quarter of an hour passed, and John heard his opponent chopping again. So both of them carried on synchronously. John was starting to feel weary when the chopping from Peter stopped once again. Feeling motivated and smelling victory close by, John continued on, with a smile on his face.

This went on the whole day. Every hour, Peter would stop chopping for fifteen minutes while John kept going relentlessly. So when the competition ended, John was absolutely confident that he would take the triumph.

But to John's astonishment, Peter had actually cut down more wood. How did this even happen? "How could you have chopped down more trees than me? I heard you stop working every hour for fifteen minutes!", exclaimed John.

Peter replied, "Well, it's really simple. Every time I stopped work, while you were still chopping down trees, I was sharpening my axe."

Everybody, everywhere seems to be busy. Most people are just too busy doing and trying to achieve that they do not take the necessary time to renew themselves, to learn and grow—to sharpen the "axe".

How exactly do you sharpen the axe?

We overwork ourselves amidst the overwhelming tasks at hand. We feel drained, exhausted and our productivity declines. Do we simply take a break, rest and relax? That isn't sharpening the axe—that's just putting the axe down. The blade will still be dull after your break. Yes, the woodcutter needs to rest, but it's only when he sharpens his blade, learns new techniques, trains up his strength and stamina, that he becomes more productive.

[Dr. Stephen R Covey](#) defined "Sharpen Your Saw (or Axe)" to be: increasing your personal productivity, by having a balanced strategy to renew yourself in the four aspects of life: Physical, Social, Mental, and Spiritual.

- Physical: Eating well, [sleeping well](#) and exercising well.

- Social/Emotional: Having a good social life. Building meaningful connections with others.
- Mental: Learning something new, reading (books are your mentors), and writing.
- Spiritual: Expanding spiritual self through meditation, spending time relaxing in nature.

Feeling good doesn't just happen. You need to take the necessary time to create growth and change in your life. [Arianna Huffington](#) urges us to sleep our way to increased productivity, happiness, and smarter decision-making. [Warren Buffet](#) credits his great money decisions to his voracious reading habit (80% of his time is spent on reading). [Toyota](#) invests time and money into their employees, developing a continuous improvement culture—a true model for a learning organization.

Remember that every day is a brand new opportunity to recharge, renew, and refine yourself. Devote some moments into sharpening your axe instead of chopping away doggedly: start working smarter instead of longer.