**T2.B1 Effective Interaction within your Research Team**

**Preparation Part Four**

1. To introduce you to the concept of synergy, please watch these videos with some examples in different areas:

Nature <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EA-FGFXDtOY>

Geese <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5rOg4WfNDfM>

Business <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vVCB1vJWQIE>

Dancing <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=smE3dD0fbE8>

Music <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=o10drRI3VQ0>

1. Read the theory about Synergy (pg. 2-3).
2. Take home material: Read the theory about Sharpen the Saw (pg. 4-5).

**Habit 6**

**Synergize**

Synergy is:

* 1+1=3
* The whole is greater than the sum of its parts
* Creativity and energy
* Together on a journey, destiny unknown

We can come up with a better solution than either one of us has in mind, if we look for a 3rd alternative we haven’t even thought of yet. Synergy is better than MY way or YOUR way, it is OUR way. We can do things together that no one would predict based on their individual strengths.

Examples:

1. If you put two pieces of wood together, they will carry exponentially more weight than each piece can bear separately.
2. Birds in a V formation can fly nearly twice as far as a lone bird because of the updraft created by the flapping of their wings.
3. A machine that can exert 60.000 pounds per square inch (PSI) on a bar of iron will break it. A bar of chromium will break at about 70.000 PSI, a bar of nickel at 80.000 PSI 🡪 210.000 PSI. But a mix bar will break at 300.000 PSI!!
4. Negative: smoking causes lung cancer. Asbestos also causes lung cancer. If you smoke & breathe asbestos, your chance of getting lung cancer is far greater than the two individual rates added together.

Needed:

* Value different points of view, frames of reference, perspectives
* Mindset of authentic respect and empathy for others
* Open questions
* Teamwork
* Collaboration
* Willingness/ability to believe there are real solutions. The word HOPE exists
* Transforming, creating
* Don’t easily take ‘no’ for an answer, be persistent

Closed questions (… or …) presume a false dilemma: there are almost always options beyond the two extremes of a dilemma. There are walls that imprison human mind. There are walls between teams, departments and functions. They form barriers to trust, communication and creativity.

Character of a synergistic person: 4 paradigms/mindset that make up 3rd Alternative thinking

1. **I see myself**: I have the power to stand outside myself and think about my own thoughts and feelings. I can examine my own motives
2. **I see you**: I have profound respect for you. I value your ideas, your experience, your perspective, and your feelings
3. **I seek you out**: I am fascinated – not threatened – by the gap between us. “You see things differently, I need to listen to you, I seek to understand”. Put yourself in the place of the other, see the world through his perspective, puzzle with him over his uncertainties. It’s about mutual *discovery* of solutions, not about *providing* solutions
4. **I synergize with you**. Japanese ‘aiki’ = blending of strengths to create a harmonious result. This makes conflict irrelevant

Skills of a synergistic person: the process of synergy

1. Ask – are you willing to go for a solution that is better than any of us have come up with yet?
2. Define – criteria of success
3. Create – 3rd Alternative. Create prototypes, avoid consensus, brainstorm new frameworks, turn thinking upside down (reverse conventional wisdom), suspend judgment, make models (show what you think instead of telling it), work fast. The best place to find synergy is ‘at the edges’, where people with divergent strengths and viewpoints cluster.
   1. Converging divergence. A complementary team is one whose strengths are made productive and weaknesses made irrelevant
   2. Teaming without frontiers
   3. Merging into a 3rd Alternative
4. Arrive – at synergy of 3rd Alternative. Excitement, hesitation and conflict are gone

2nd Alternative vs. 3rd Alternative

It takes a lot of courage for workers to question their supervisors. Supervisors and other leaders take smiling, nodding faces around them for harmony and consensus. This can be a fatal error. Instead of fight or flight (2nd Alternative), choose the synergistic response: welcome, delight, engagement, discovery. See ‘conflict’ as fertile ground instead of battleground.

Examples. Supervisor says:

* “Suppose you did this experiment a little differently?”
  + Typical reaction: “he wants me to do it his way”
  + Synergistic reaction: “he wants to offer me another perspective”
* “Suppose you write it down and send it to me in an e-mail?”
  + Typical reaction: “I’ve spent too much of his time already, I have to go now”
  + Synergistic reaction: “he has confidence in my ability to come up with my own solution”

**Habit 7**

**Sharpen the saw**

Habit #7 in Steve Covey’s *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People* is called “Sharpen the Saw.” Covey uses the common analogy of a woodcutter who is sawing for over 5 hours straight and is becoming less and less productive. The process of cutting dulls the blade. So the solution is to periodically sharpen the saw. But the woodcutter says: “I don’t have time to sharpen the saw. I’m too busy sawing!” Habit 7 is taking time to sharpen the saw. It is the habit that makes all the others possible.

I’ve found that in practice, however, most people fail to understand what sharpening the saw really means. If you’re overworking yourself and your productivity begins to fall off, 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 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:

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

Habit 7 is renewing/exercising the **four dimensions of your nature**: regularly and consistently in wise and balanced ways. To neglect any one area negatively impacts the rest. They are highly interrelated.

* Physical
* Spiritual
* Mental
* Social/emotional

**Physical**: eating the right kinds of foods, getting sufficient rest and relaxation, exercising on a regular basis

**Spiritual**: your core, your center, your commitment to and harmony with your value system

**Mental**: reading, writing, visualizing & planning (habits 2 and 3)

**Social/emotional**: habits 4, 5 and 6. Synergy, empathy, intrinsic security (inside-out congruence, living a life of integrity in which our daily habits reflect our deepest values), service (helping people in a meaningful way)

Now the woodcutter can’t just alternate between cutting wood and sharpening the saw indefinitely. Downtime is needed too, but it isn’t the same as sharpening the saw. The woodcutter can become even more productive by sharpening the blade, studying new woodcutting techniques, working out to become stronger, and learning from other woodcutters.

Forgetting to intentionally sharpen the saw can lead to a feeling of burnout. If you merely alternate between productive work and downtime, your production capacity will drop off. You’re still working hard, but you don’t feel as productive as you think you should be. When you sharpen yourself regularly, you’ll find that you can flow along at a steady pace week after week without getting burnt out.

Whenever I feel burnt out or overwhelmed, taking a day or two off helps a little, but not very much. What yields a much greater benefit for me is attending a weekend seminar, reading an inspiring book, or having an interesting conversation. It’s common to see people return from a conference with a notable spike in motivation that lasts for weeks. But this isn’t really a break or a vacation — going to a conference is an activity, but it’s the kind that often increases energy and motivation.

How are your various blades doing? Your skills, your knowledge, your mind, your physical body, your relationships, your motivation, your commitment, your capacity for enjoyment, your emotions — are all of them still sharp? If not, which ones are dull, and what can you do to sharpen them?

*taken from www.stevepavlina.com (2013)*