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HABIT 1

Be Proactive®

Be Proactive means to take responsibility for your choices and behaviors. Habit 1 is the key to all of the other habits; that's why it comes first. *Be Proactive* says, "I am in charge of my own life. I am responsible for whether I am happy or sad. I can choose how I react to other people or situations. I am in the driver's seat." Young children can easily learn to understand that different choices yield different results. The goal is to teach them to think about those results before they decide what to do. Discussions can focus on taking care of themselves, taking care of their things, reacting or not reacting to others' behavior, planning ahead, and thinking about what the right thing to do is. With your child, think of ways to Be Proactive at home.

Younger-Child Activities

Most of us react to a situation immediately, without taking time to think about the results of our actions. Part of *Be Proactive* is being able to stop and think before we act. With your child, do some role-playing to practice the skill of stopping and thinking in different situations. Your goal in these role plays is to encourage your child to stop and think before reacting. Use the following ideas to get started, and then think of some that can be immediately applicable to your child's life.

1. (In this role play, you should play the part of your child's friend.) Say that you have a new best friend who lives close to your house and you don't want to play with him or her anymore. Apologize and then wait for your child's reaction.
2. (In this role play, you should be your child's sibling.) Tell your child that you broke his or her favorite toy by accident. Tell him or her that you don't think it's a very big deal because he or she has many toys.
3. (In this role play, you should play the part of your child and your child should play the part of you). Tell your child that you are "sooooo bored" and there is nothing fun to do. Complain that no one wants to play and that he or she (as the parent) needs to amuse you.
4. Read Chapter 1 of *The 7 Habits of Happy Kids* book with your child and then complete the Parent's Corner.

Teen Activities

Older children begin to rely more and more on their peer group; they can allow a rude comment by a friend to ruin their whole day and are easily led into misbehavior by their peer group. As a parent, it's important to help your teenager understand the importance of taking responsibility for his or her own life and choices. It's also important for you as a parent to let your child learn from his or her mistakes. If you always save the day, your child won't learn responsibility and independence.

1. The next time your child forgets homework or his or her soccer shoes before the big game, think hard before coming to the rescue. What are you teaching your child when you save the day?
2. If your child has a dispute with a teacher or gets a grade he or she thinks is unfair, encourage your teen to make an appointment with the teacher to discuss it one-on-one instead of doing it for him or her.

3. Make a pact with your teen to together stop an unhealthy habit. Identify the habit you want to stop (smoking, overeating, watching too much TV, not exercising, etc.) and choose a start date, an end date, and progress check-in dates along the way. Explain to your teen that research shows it takes a full 21-days to start a new habit or stop an old one, so it's important not to get discouraged or give up too quickly.
4. Have a discussion with your teen about the things he or she would be willing to stand up and fight for in the face of peer pressure. Tell your child you don't want him or her to tell you what he or she thinks you want to hear. You might try role-playing this so your child can be prepared to stand up to a friend or group if needed.
5. The amount of trust you have in a relationship is like a checking account at a bank. If you make lots of deposits, you develop high trust and a big account. If you make lots of withdrawals, you have a low balance. Share this idea with your teen and then think of things you can both do to increase your deposits with each other. Let your teen do most of the talking and really listen to his or her ideas. Have your child list what his or her own personal deposits and withdrawals might be. You can also make your own list of what you consider to be deposits and withdrawals for you.

