Being Proactive

“Proactive adj. (of a person or action) creating or controlling a situation rather than just responding to it after it has happened.”

To be proactive means that you take responsibility for your situation because you are the one who is in control of your life. That might mean taking charge of your success in school by asking your teacher questions after class, taking responsibility for your mistakes, choosing to see challenges as a chance to learn something or asking someone out rather than waiting for them to ask you. The main thing is to know that you have the power to make positive changes in your life.

Now that you are old enough to begin thinking about independent living, you need to understand that YOU are in charge of YOUR life. Sometimes it may not feel that way. I mean there are always going to be adults who like to tell you what to do (and usually it pays to listen to them), but that doesn’t mean that you don’t have control over/responsibility for your own life.

Throughout the day you make 100’s of decisions that will affect your life whether you realize it or not. You choose not to do your homework, you choose to get in a fight with your friend, you choose to blame someone else for your bad day. But what if you made different choices? What if you chose to have a successful job by continuing your education, or if you chose to be happy by not letting someone else ruin your day with something mean they just said. You control your mood, and your response to what life throws at you and in the end you control what direction your life is going to go in.

Ultimately you have a decision to make:

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You can let someone else run your life for you, complain when things don’t turn out and be a victim.

OR

YOU can grab the wheel and take responsibility for your own life, your decisions and your learning and shape your life into the one that YOU want.

That’s not to say that being the one who makes all the decisions about your life will be easy—sometimes it will be hard and you might even wish that someone would just take over for you. But there is no better person to deal with your life than you. YOU are in charge and you have the power to decide what sort of future you want.

- Dr. Seuss from “Oh, the Places You’ll Go!”
Being Proactive

SELF IDENTITY– WHAT MAKES YOU TICK?

Do you try to act a certain way to get other people to like you? If you do, aren’t you hiding who you really are? Do you know who you really are? It’s important to know yourself– including the positives and negatives. Give yourself some downtime to reflect on your life, think about what things are most important to you.

Ask Yourself:
- What are my life goals?
- Do I really tell the truth? Or do I say what others want to hear?
- What kind of career do I want?
- Am I doing what I want, or what others want?
- What am I good at?
- Am I happy with the people I date or hang out with?
- Do I like hanging out with my friends, do they respect me?
- How do other people see me?
- Am I a good friend?
- Am I good to myself?
- Do I tell myself the truth?
- What would I like to be doing in 10 years time?

Don’t be hard on yourself; these are difficult questions to answer. Take your time and reflect on your life and what you are doing. You might be surprised at your answers.

YOUR TALENTS

You are a unique individual– no one else in the world is like you. And that means that you have certain talents and abilities that only you can offer the world– no one else. What sort of things can you offer an employer or a volunteer supervisor? What are your talents? What are you good at?

What do you absolutely love? Remember, talents aren’t just the traditional ones like athlete, or being good at math. Maybe you are really creative, or you are a good speaker or you love collecting rocks. All are valuable talents which you should try and develop.

List 5 things that you love to do. It could be singing, running, daydreaming– anything!

1________________________
2________________________
3________________________
4________________________
5________________________

What are you good at? Here are a few ideas to get you started. Add any other talents you have to the list.

- Good with numbers
- Good with words
- Athletics
- Making things happen
- Sensing needs
- Mechanical
- Artistic
- Working well with others
- Memorizing things
- Decision making
- Building things
- Accepting others
- Speaking
- Listening
- Humorous
- Sharing
- Music
- Trivia
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**SELF ESTEEM**

Self esteem is about liking yourself. Take time to enjoy yourself—celebrate your success! It might be something like staying within your budget, or getting along better with a friend. Or it might be getting through the day when you’re having a tough time. Give yourself credit!

Sometimes it’s easy to think about the parts of yourself you don’t like but try not to get stuck putting yourself down.

You are a special person. It’s worth reminding yourself that you bring some special things to the world!

**Take Pride!!!**

List five things that you like about yourself (things you’ve done for yourself or for others, skills etc.)

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

**SELF-CONFIDENCE**

Having good self-confidence means that you can stick up for yourself against negative peer pressure and can make sure your needs and wants are heard.

**Self-Confidence** = positive, realistic views of yourself along with a sense of control of your life.

**Lack of Self-Confidence** = self-doubt, low mood, being a doormat for others. Feeling like you aren’t good enough and don’t have control of your life.

**TIPS TO BE MORE SELF-CONFIDENT**

- Stop the inner critic—ignore that negative voice in your head that says you aren’t good enough. Talk to yourself as you would to a friend.
- Think logically—don’t assume negative reasons are always the cause of an event. If someone walks by you and doesn’t smile at you, don’t assume it’s because they don’t like you or think you are weird. It’s not always about you!
- Practice self-care—put yourself first, eat healthily, exercise, get enough sleep etc. You are worth the effort!
- Give yourself credit—celebrate your successes and what you are good at.
- Stick up for yourself—speak clearly and loudly when you have something you want to say. Your opinions are just as important as the next person’s.
- Take risks—don’t be afraid to fail or embarrass yourself. Try new things and consider them chances to learn and grow.
- Have fun—get out and do something you are good at.
- Forgive yourself—you aren’t perfect. If you don’t do as well as you had hoped, so what! You did your best.
- Get support
- Be positive

**YOU HAVE EVERY RIGHT TO:**

- Be heard!
- Your opinion
- Express yourself
- Ask for help
- Make mistakes

- Have good relationships
- Speak your mind
- Your own beliefs and values
- Change your mind
- Decide how you live your life.
Being Proactive

STICKING UP FOR YOURSELF

Sometimes you need to stick up for yourself. Others might treat you badly or not listen to what you have to say. They might also try to talk you into things you don’t want to do. Sticking up for yourself means letting other people know what you need and want. It means making up your own mind and choosing your own path.

Peer Pressure= when your friends persuade you to do something you would normally not do or talk you out of doing something. There is both positive and negative pressure.

Positive: a friend getting you to exercise with them, encouraging you to eat healthily, pushing you to try a new hobby, talking you out of drinking and driving.

Negative: pushing you to smoke or do drugs, saying they won’t be your friend anymore if you don’t lend them money, putting you down if you don’t do what they tell you etc.

FIGHTING NEGATIVE PEER PRESSURE

- Play out a script in your mind. Think of possible scenarios and what you could say or do.
- Educate yourself. Learn about issues like drugs so you can confidently speak your opinion knowing the facts.
- Speaking out pays off. If you hesitate you may be pressured more.
- Respect yourself. Refuse to give up on your values.
- It’s your life! Never forget that you have a choice.
- Refuse. Don’t let other people scare you.
- Don’t put yourself in a situation where you know you will be pressured to do something you may regret later.
- Pick your friends wisely.

Practice Saying NO!

Sometimes it’s hard to say no. Maybe it’s because you want people to like you. But friends worth having will respect you when you say no. Help them understand that you aren’t putting them down when you say no. Be as firm as you need to be!

Some ways to say “No”

- That’s OK for you, but I’m not into it.
- Nope, I’m not going there because I ...
- No. I don’t want to, and please don’t hassle me.

You can also say no by staying away from bad scenes. If you aren’t there, nobody can pressure you.

REMEMBER THAT GOOD FRIENDS....

- give each other freedom to be different
- listen to each other
- don’t always need to agree
- aren’t selfish – keep each other’s interests in mind
- encourage each other to grow – even if it means growing apart

If “friends” don’t fit this picture – why listen to them? Friendship is a two-way street. Are you being a good friend?
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Whether I fail or succeed shall be no man’s doing but my own. I am the force; I can clear any obstacle before me or I can be lost in the maze. My choice; my responsibility; win or lose, only I hold the key to my destiny.

- Elaine Maxwell

Don’t be afraid to ask questions— it’s part of being proactive. If you don’t understand something, or want something clarified, it’s your responsibility to ask those questions and get the answers you need. No one else can do it for you.

SETTING GOALS

Goals are an important part of being proactive because if you don’t have a plan (even a general one) how do you expect to know where you want to go, much less how to get there? Goals help you break down a greater life plan (like knowing what kind of person you want to be) into smaller bite-sized pieces. You can have short term goals (1-4 weeks) (ex. saving enough to buy that new movie you want), medium term goals (2-12 months) (ex. getting a good mark in your math class), or long term goals (more than a year) (ex. getting the job you want). Write down your goals and the steps needed to achieve them and put them in a place where you will see them every day.

SHORT TERM GOAL_________________________________________________________
WILL BE ACHIEVED BY THIS DATE:__________________________________________

MEDIUM TERM GOAL_____________________________________________________
WILL BE ACHIEVED BY THIS DATE:__________________________________________

LONG TERM GOAL_________________________________________________________
WILL BE ACHIEVED BY THIS DATE:__________________________________________
Being Proactive

TIME MANAGEMENT

There is never going to be enough time in the day, so you need to learn to manage your schedule, set priorities and find the right balance between work and play.

TIPS TO MANAGE YOUR TIME

- Identify your goals— what needs to be done?
- Set priorities— what is most important? What should you work on first, and what can wait?
- Set aside enough time for each task— be realistic about how much time it will take you to do each task.
- Schedule time for your most important tasks first— once you decide when you are going to tackle your big and important tasks, you can fit in other smaller tasks and goals.
- Write it down— day planners, agendas and just plain calendars are really important tools to help you stay on track. Write down due dates for your goals and tasks so you can keep track of everything.

PROCRASTINATION

Are you always putting things off and making excuses? Procrastination is when you delay or avoid thinking about a particular task. Here are a few common reasons for procrastination and tips to help.

REASONS FOR PROCRASTINATION AND TIPS TO HELP

- Too challenging— sometimes it seems too difficult to start a task we know will be hard and we don’t even know where to start so we avoid doing it altogether. Break down the task into smaller, easier steps.
- Not enough knowledge or fear of failure— sometimes the task requires complex skills or knowledge. Without these skills or knowledge, we may delay starting a task thinking it would be easier to wait until we know exactly what to do to avoid failure. Try to see failure as a chance to learn. Jump in and you may be surprised at the knowledge you gain just by trying.
- Not enough time— the task seems overwhelming and may take a lot of time and energy. Break down the task into smaller chunks and give each one a reasonable time frame. You can get a lot done in just 15 minutes if there are no interruptions.
- Distractions— often we can’t focus because we are in our regular environment with all the distractions of daily living. Take control of the situation! Turn off the phone and TV, get off the internet and find a quiet place to work.
- Too many projects on the go— often we put off tasks because we are swamped. Choose what is most important first.
- Feeling guilty— often we put off tasks because we feel guilty for not spending time with friends or family. Remember that the sooner you finish a task, the more quality time you’ll be able to spend with your loved ones.
# Being Proactive

## PROBLEM SOLVING

In life you are bound to come across challenges— that’s just the way life works. BUT if you know how to deal with problems in a healthy and productive way, there won’t be a problem in the world that you won’t be able to handle.

1. **Identify the problem.** Who or what is involved and what is going on?

2. **What are the root causes of the problem**— ie. Why do you have this problem in the first place? What are the effects?

3. **What are some possible solutions?** Brainstorm lots of options— don’t worry if they might not work— be creative.

4. **Pick one of your solutions and put it into action.**

5. **Is your problem solved?**

   - YES! Good work. What did you learn from this problem and its solution?
   - NO. That’s ok— go back to step 3 and try another solution. Don’t worry if it takes you a few tries. You might have to take it back to step 1 or 2 in case you missed something the first time.

## PROBLEM SOLVING (AN EXAMPLE)

So you failed your math test and now you are in really big trouble at school because you might fail math altogether.

1. **Identify the problem**
   - You failed your test and now you are in trouble at school.

2. **What are the causes?**
   - Not studying
   - Staying out late the night before
   - Not asking questions when you didn’t understand something.

2b. **What are the effects?**
   - Your teacher is angry
   - You might fail your math class
   - Possible loss of privileges

3. **Possible solutions**
   - Ask the teacher if you can retake the test
   - Study harder next time to bring up your mark
   - Offer to do extra work to make up for the failed test
   - Go in for extra help sessions.

4. **Pick a solution**

   You decide to go in for extra help and ask the teacher if you can retake the test.

5. **Did it work?**

   Yes, your teacher was more than happy to help you and was glad that you were taking responsibility for your work. You were able to bring your mark back up.

## REMEMBER!

- Focus on the problem not the person— ie. don’t play the blame game.
- Keep a positive attitude and don’t get discouraged if you can’t find a solution right away.
- Ask for help if you are struggling to solve a problem.
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DEALING WITH STRESS

Stress is a part of life. If you don’t deal with it, stress can make you sick, hurt your relationships and make a lot of problems for you in the long run. Learn to recognize when you are stressed out and how to deal with it effectively.

SYMPTOMS OF STRESS

Physical symptoms:
Headache, sore neck, being tired, indigestion, stomach pains, sweaty palms, anxiety, racing heart, irregular sleep

Emotional symptoms:
crying, angry, lonely, forgetfulness, lack of sense of humour, irritability, hopelessness, unhappy, easily upset

Behavioural symptoms:
drinking or using drugs, bossiness, self-critical, anger outbursts, restlessness, smoking, grinding teeth, irregular eating habits.

TIPS TO LESSEN STRESS

• Attitude— focus on the positive and parts of your life that you are able to change.
• Eat a healthy diet— give your body the fuel it needs to tackle stress (ie. Nutritious meals)
• Be active
• Sleep— when you get a good night’s sleep, your mind will be sharper and you’ll have more energy
• Time management— procrastinating can be a stressor. Learn how to schedule your time well.
• No drugs and alcohol— you won’t think straight if you start boozing or taking drugs and you’ll make poor decisions. The stress will still be there after you come off a high or sober up. Don’t use drugs or alcohol to deal with stress.
• Breathe— take time to yourself. After a good relaxing break you’ll feel refreshed and more enthusiastic about taking on challenges.
• Get friends— don’t isolate yourself. If you have a good support network you’ll have a better chance of reducing your stress
• Help others— volunteering can be a rewarding way to reduce stress
• Don’t try to be perfect— just do your best!

To take a stress test check the Canadian Mental Health Association site:
http://www.cmha.ca/bins/content_page.asp?cid=4-42-216

HAVING A POSTIVIE ATTITUDE

Having a good attitude is so important to being proactive because letting someone or something control your mood is exactly the opposite of being in the driver’s seat of your life. You have the power to choose to respond to situations in a positive way (and you’ll be happier if you do).

How do you do this? Well next time someone makes you upset, try pressing the pause button on your life. Instead of acting out of habit, stop for a second, get control and think about how you want to respond. You can choose to respond with kindness when someone is rude to you, you can choose to see a challenge as a chance to learn and grow. It’s all up to you.
Things To Do

☐ __________________________________________ Date:__________

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Parking Lot Issues

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Online Resources

BEING PROACTIVE
- www.goalsguy.com/knowledge/t_15_shouldknow.html
- http://whoyouwant2be.org

SELF ESTEEM

GENDER IDENTITY
- www.youthresource.com
- www.avert.org/gay-lesbian.htm

STICKING UP FOR YOURSELF/PEER PRESSURE
- http://thecoolspot.gov/pressures.asp

GOAL SETTING
- http://whoyouwant2be.org/where-am-i-headed/goal-setting/
- www.cedu.niu.edu/~shumow/iit/forreview/GoalSettingForTeens.pdf
- www.topachievement.com/smart.html

TIME MANAGEMENT
- http://academictips.org/acad/timemanagement.html
- www.teensadvisor.com/teen-schooling/time-management.html
- http://pbskids.org/itsmylife/school/time/index.html

PROBLEM SOLVING
- www.peelregion.ca/health/commhlth/probsolv/psintro.htm

DEALING WITH STRESS
- www.heartandstroke.com/site/c.iklQLcMWJtE/b.2796497/k.BF8B/Home.htm?src=home– Heart and Stroke Foundation
- www.lifespan.org/services/childhealth/parenting/teen-stress.htm

Check out the book “The Seven Habits of Highly Effective Teens” by Sean Covey. It has good information about goal setting, knowing yourself and other pointers for being the best you can be.