

EP 7 Habits Advisory Program

Handbook for Habit 1

*Adapted from *The Leader in Me Activity Guide*
and *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective Teens*

Student Name:

Advisory Teacher:

This packet should be read by:

Habit One: Be Proactive

What does proactive mean?

Being proactive is the opposite of being reactive. It means to take responsibility for your actions.

What does reactive mean?

Reactive means to be acted upon and controlled by events and emotions.

Each day we have about 100 chances to choose whether to be proactive or reactive. In any given day, the weather is bad, your sister steals your favorite shirt, you don't do well on a test, your parents don't let you go uptown, you didn't finish your homework. So what are you going to do about it? Are you in the habit of reacting to these kinds of everyday things, or are you proactive? The choice is yours. It really is. You don't have to respond the way everyone else does or the way people think you should.

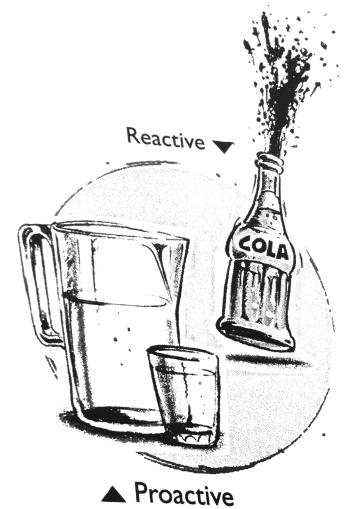
How many times have you been walking down the hall at school, and someone pushes into you? What do you do? Do you fly off at the mouth? Give 'em the bird? Let it ruin your day? Lose bladder control? Or do you just let it go? Laugh about it. Move on. The choice is YOURS.

Reactive people make choices based on impulse. They are like a can of soda pop. If life shakes them up a bit, the pressure builds and suddenly they explode. "Hey, you stupid jerk! Get out of my lane!"

Proactive people make choices based on values. They *think* before they act. They recognize they can't control everything that happens to them, but they can control *what they do about it*. Unlike reactive people who are full of carbonation, proactive people are like water. Shake them up all you want, take off the lid, and nothing. No fizzing, no bubbling, no pressure. They are calm, cool, and in control.

"I'm not going to let that guy get me upset and ruin my day."

A great way to understand the proactive mind-set is to compare proactive and reactive responses to situations that happen all the time.



Scene

You overhear your best friend bad-mouthing you in front of a group of peers. They don't know you overheard the conversation. Just five minutes ago, this same friend was nice to you and talking to you as if nothing were wrong. You feel hurt and betrayed.

How would you react?

Reactive choices	Proactive choices
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tell them off. Then hit them. • Go into a deep depression because you feel so bad about what they said. • Decide that they are a two-faced liar and give them the silent treatment for a while. • Spread vicious rumors about them. After all, they did it to you. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Forgive them. • Confront them and calmly share how you feel. • Ignore it and give them a second chance. Realize that they have weaknesses just like you and that occasionally you talk behind their back without meaning any harm.

Listen to Your Language

You can usually hear the difference between proactive and reactive people by the type of language they use. Reactive language usually sounds like this:

- “That’s me. That’s just the way I am.” What you’re really saying is, *I’m not responsible for the way I act. I can’t change. I was predetermined to be this way.*
- “If my parents weren’t so mean, things would be different.” What you’re really saying is, *My parents are the cause of all my problems, not me.*
- “Thanks a lot. You just ruined my day.” What you’re really saying is, *I’m not in control of my own moods. You are.*
- “If only I attend a different school, had better friends, made more allowance money, lived in a different house... then I’d be happy.” What you are really saying is, *I’m not in control of my own happiness, “things” are. I must have things to be happy.*

Notice that reactive language takes power away from you and gives it to something or someone else. As John Bytheway explains in his book *What I Wish I’d Known in High School*, when you’re reactive it’s like giving someone else the remote control to your life and saying, “Here, change my mood anytime you wish.” Proactive language on the other hand, puts the remote control back into your own hands. You are then free to choose which channel you want to be on.

Reactive Language	Proactive Language
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I’ll try • That’s just the way I am • There’s nothing I can do • I have to • I can’t • You ruined my day 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I’ll do it • I can do better than that • Let’s look at our options • I choose to • There’s gotta be a way • I’m not going to let your bad mood rub off on me

The Victimitis Virus

Some people suffer from a contagious virus, we'll call it "victimitis." Perhaps you've seen it. People infected with victimitis believe that everyone has it in for them and that the world owes them something...which isn't the case at all. Author Mark Twain expressed the same idea when he said, "Don't go around saying the world owes you a living. The world owes you nothing. It was here first."

You may have been on a sports team with someone who has caught victimitis? They say things like:

- "I would be starting, but the coaches have something against me."*
- "I was about to intercept the ball, but somebody cut me off."*
- "I would have got a better 40-yard dash time, but my shoes came loose."*

These kinds of people usually do not find much success. In their mind, the problem is always "out there." They never consider that perhaps *their* attitude is the problem.

Besides feeling like victims, reactive people:

- Are easily offended
- Blame others
- Get angry and say things they later regret
- Whine and complain
- Wait for things to happen to them
- Change only when they have to

It Pays to Be Proactive

Proactive people are a different breed. Proactive people:

- Are not easily offended
- Take responsibility for their choices
- Think before they act
- Bounce back when something bad happens
- Always find a way to make it happen
- Focus on things they can do something about, and don't worry about things they can't

You might be thinking to yourself, "Come on, it's not that easy." You're right! Being reactive is so much easier. It's easy to lose your cool. That doesn't take any control, and it's easy to whine and complain. Without question, being proactive is the higher road.

But remember, you don't have to be perfect. In reality, none of us are either completely reactive or proactive but probably somewhere in between. The key then is to get in the habit of being proactive so you can run on autopilot and not even have to think about it. If you're choosing to be proactive 20 out of 100 times on average each day, try doing it 30 out of 100 times. Then 40. Never underestimate the huge difference small changes can make.

We Can Control Only One Thing

The fact is, we can't control everything that happens to us. We can't control the color of our skin, who will win the NBA finals, where we were born, who our parents are, or how others might treat us. But there is one thing we *can* control: *how we respond to what happens to us*. And that is what counts! This is why we need to stop worrying about the things we can't control and start worrying about the things we *can*.

Picture two circles. The inner circle is our circle of control. It includes things we have control over, such as ourselves, our attitudes, our choices, our response to whatever happens to us. Surrounding the circle of control is the circle of no control. It includes the thousands of things we can't do anything about.

Now, what will happen if we spend our time and energy worrying about things we can't control, like a rude comment, a past mistake, or the weather? You guessed it! We'll feel even more out of control, as if we were victims. For instance, if your sister bugs you and you're always complaining about her weaknesses (something you have no control over), that won't do anything to fix the problem. It'll only cause you to blame your problems on her and lose power yourself.



Can Do

Being proactive really means two things. First, you take responsibility for your actions. Second, you have a can-do attitude. If you think can-do, and you're creative and persistent, it's amazing what you can accomplish.

American aviator Elinor Smith once said, "It has since come to my attention that people of accomplishment rarely sat back and let things happen to them. They went out and happened to things." It's so true. To reach your goals in life, you must seize the initiative. If you're feeling bad about not being asked to join activities, don't just sit around and sulk, do something about it.

Find ways to ask people if you can join their activity, or organize your own. Be friendly and try smiling a lot. You might just find you get along with different people better than you thought.

Just Push Pause

So when someone is rude to you, where do you get the power to resist being rude back? For starters, just push pause. Yep, just reach up and push the pause button to your life just as you would on your remote control. (The pause button should be located somewhere in the middle of your forehead.) Sometimes life is moving so fast that we instantly react to everything out of sheer habit. If you can learn to pause, get control, and think about how you want to respond, you'll make smarter decisions. Yes, your childhood, your parents, your genes, and your environment *influence* you to act in certain ways, but they can't *make* you do anything. You are not determined but are free to choose.



While your life is on pause, open up your toolbox (the one that you were born with) and use your four human tools to help you decide what to do. Animals don't have these tools and that's why you're smarter than your dog. These tools are self-awareness, conscience, imagination, and willpower. You might want to call them your power tools.



SELF-AWARENESS: *I can stand apart from myself and observe my thoughts and actions.*



CONSCIENCE: *I can listen to my inner voice to know right from wrong.*



IMAGINATION: *I can envision new possibilities.*



WILLPOWER: *I have the power to choose.*