Habit 1: Be Proactive

Growing up in my house was at times a big pain. Why? Because my dad always made me take responsibility for everything in my life.

Whenever I said something like “Dad, my girlfriend makes me so mad,” without fail Dad would come back with: “Now come on, Sean, no one can make you mad unless you let them. It’s your choice. You choose to be mad.”

Or if I said, “My new biology teacher stinks. I’m never going to learn a thing,” Dad would say, “Why don’t you go to your teacher and give some suggestions? Change teachers. Get a tutor if you have to. If you don’t learn biology, Sean, it’s your own fault, not your teacher’s.”

He never let me off the hook. He was always challenging me, making sure that I never blamed someone else for the way I acted. Luckily my mom let me blame other people and things for my problems or I might have turned out psycho.

I often screamed back, “You’re wrong, Dad! I didn’t choose to be mad. She MADE me mad. Just get off my back and leave me alone.”

You see, Dad’s idea that you are responsible for your life was hard medicine for me to swallow as a teenager. But, with hindsight, I see the wisdom in what he was doing. He wanted me to learn that there are two types of people in this world – the proactive and the reactive – those who take responsibility for their lives and those who blame; those who make it happen and those who get happened to.

Habit 1, Be Proactive, is the key to unlocking all the other habits and that’s why it comes first. Habit 1 says “I am the force. I am the captain of my life. I can choose my attitude. I’m responsible for my own happiness or unhappiness. I am in the driver’s seat of my destiny, not just a passenger…”

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.

PROACTIVE

- Principles and Values

REACTIVE Make choices based off:

- Emotions
Habit 1: Be Proactive

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’ve been working at your job in the store for over a year now and have been extremely committed and dependable. Three months ago, a new employee joined the crew. Recently, he was given the coveted Saturday afternoon shift, the shift you were hoping for.

Reactive Choices
✓ Spend half your waking hours complaining to everyone and their dog about how unfair the decision was.
✓ Scrutinize the new employee and find his every weakness.
✓ Begin to slack off while working your shift.

Proactive Choices
✓ Talk with your supervisor about why the new employee got the better shift.
✓ Learn what you can do to improve your performance.
✓ If you determine you are in a dead-end job, begin looking for a new one.

Listen to Your Language

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<th>Reactive Language sounds like:</th>
<th>What they’re really saying is...</th>
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<tr>
<td>“That’s me. That’s just the way I am”</td>
<td>I’m not responsible for the way I act. I can’t change. I was predetermined to be this way.</td>
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<td>“If my boss wasn’t such a jerk, things would be different.”</td>
<td>My boss is the cause of all my problems, not me.</td>
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<td>“Thanks a lot. You just ruined my day.”</td>
<td>I’m not in control of my own moods. You are.</td>
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Reactive Language gives power to something or someone else: I’ll try, There’s nothing I can do, I have to, I can’t

Proactive Language gives you the power and freedom to choose: I’ll do it, I can do better than that, Let’s look at all our options, I choose to, There’s gotta be a way, I’m not going to let your bad mood rub off on me.
Habit 1: Be Proactive

How do we prevent ourselves from being reactive?

We can only control one thing:

“It is useless to worry about that which we cannot control”

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>REACTIVE MODEL</th>
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<td>ACTION</td>
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Four Human Tools

- I can stand apart from myself and observe my thoughts and actions
- I can listen to my inner voice to know right from wrong
- I can envision new possibilities
- I have the power to choose