



# Parent's Guide

The **Leader in Me**™  
great happens here

# 1

## 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.





# Begin With the End in Mind®

*Begin With the End in Mind* means to think about how you would like something to turn out before you get started. Reading a recipe before cooking or looking at a map before leaving on a trip is beginning with the end in mind. For young children, a good example is that of a jigsaw puzzle. Before doing a puzzle, they look at the cover of the box. They start with the end in mind.

## Family Mission Statement

A family mission statement is like a constitution your family lives by that helps you all make decisions for your life. It represents the purpose and values of your family, and will allow you to shape your future according to the principles you as a family hold most dear, rather than letting other people or circumstances determine it.

Mission statements take many forms. Some are long and some are short. They may take form as a saying or phrase, a picture, a poem, or even a song. Make it personal to your family.

### Get started by following these steps:

1. Discuss the following questions with your family:

What does our family want to be known for?

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How do we treat each other?

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What unique contributions can we make?

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What big goals do we want to achieve?

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What unique talents and skills do we have?

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2. Brainstorm ideas, words, and phrases to include in the mission statement. Remember, no idea is a bad idea.
3. Begin crafting your statement, but remember, it doesn't have to be finished in one sitting. It can be a work in progress until you are all happy with the outcome.
4. Post the statement prominently in your home and encourage the entire family to consider it when making decisions or having disputes.

**Here are some sample statements:**

*We want to be the kind of family our dog already thinks we are.*

*The mission of our family is to create a nurturing place of order, love, happiness, and relaxation, and to provide opportunities for each person to become responsibly independent and effectively interdependent, in order to achieve worthwhile purposes.*

*No empty chairs.*



### Younger-Child Activities

1. Habit 2 provides a good base for activities around goal setting. As a family (or with an individual child), choose an area that needs improvement. The area of improvement, or the broad goal, becomes your end in mind. Then think of specific steps that will lead to achieving this goal. For example, if the goal is to improve as a reader, specific steps may include reading a certain amount of time every day or working several times a week to improve oral fluency.
2. Ask your child if there is something special he or she would like to buy, then help your child plan how much money he or she will need to save and how long it will take. Discuss ideas for earning extra money like doing additional chores and helping around the house.
3. Create a "wants" and "needs" collage with your child. Cut out pictures of various items (toys, candy, vegetables, cleaning supplies, appliances, books, etc.) from a magazine and then ask your child to paste them under the correct column of "wants" or "needs." Discuss why he or she chose to put the items in the respective columns.
4. Read Chapter 2 of *The 7 Habits of Happy Kids* book with your child and then complete the Parent's Corner.

### Teen Activities

1. Discuss your child's career ambitions and help him or her identify the most important skills that will be needed to succeed in that career. Then encourage your child to meet with the school counselor to discuss his or her career ambitions, and the skills it will require, and plan the school path that will make it happen.
2. Identify and encourage extracurricular activities that support your child's goals.
3. Help your child look for jobs and internships related to his or her goals.
4. Older kids have more expensive "wants," but they are also capable of earning more money. Ask your teen if there is something special he or she would like to buy, then help your child plan how much money he or she will need to save and how long it will take. Discuss ideas for earning extra money like getting a part time-job or doing extra chores.

# Put First Things First®

*Put First Things First* means to decide what is most important and to take care of that first. Thinking about what needs to be done tomorrow or by the end of the week can be overwhelming, especially for children. Learning to think of which things are the most important and taking care of them first allows children (and adults) to be less stressed. If your child uses a planner at school, then he or she has a great organizational tool to Put First Things First in writing. By writing down his or her responsibilities and planning ahead, last-minute trips to the store, missed events, or missed homework are avoided. If your child does not use a planner, having a weekly log would also be helpful. This could simply be a piece of paper that is used each week. Modeling this behavior is one of the best ways to teach children.



## Younger-Child Activities

1. Create a list of things your child needs to accomplish throughout a week. With your child, rank the tasks in importance. Then rewrite the list in order of importance. Use a planner or calendar to schedule time so that the important things are done first.
2. Role-play with your child about the consequences of forgetting to study for a math test. How will your child feel? What are the consequences? Then role-play how it will feel to be well prepared and get a great match score!
3. Encourage your child to design or decorate his or her own planner or weekly activity log.
4. Read Chapter 3 of *The 7 Habits of Happy Kids* book with your child and then complete the Parent's Corner.

## Teen Activities

1. If your teen doesn't currently use a planning system, buy one. (It makes a great gift, and is an investment that will pay off in the long run.) If your teen prefers electronics to paper, no problem. There are a variety of online and software resources as well.
2. Ask your child to make a list of what he or she thinks is his or her biggest time-waster and what to do about it.
3. Plan time as a family. This is especially important as your children get older and want to spend more and more time with friends. Set aside a couple of hours once a week as family time. Watch a movie, go out to eat, play games, cook dinner together—whatever fits your family. Protect this time and make it a tradition. Everyone in the family should block it out on their calendars.

# HABIT 4 Think Win-Win®

*Think Win-Win* is the belief that everyone can win. It's not me or you—it is both of us. It is a belief that there are enough good things for everyone; it is an abundant way of thinking. Think Win-Win is being happy for others when good things happen to them. As a parent, not everything is negotiable, but if you go into discussions with your child with a win-win mindset, you'll find a lot less resistance.

## Younger-Child Activities

1. Play a game with your child(ren) that has a definite winner. Explain how competition is okay when you play a game, but it is not okay in relationships. Discuss how tense it would be in your home if every situation had to have a winner. A better way to think is win-win. This means we think of solutions that we can all feel good about when there is a problem. The more we Think Win-Win, the fewer problems there will be. You may want to display a chart listing the days of the week. When someone is "caught" thinking win-win, he or she gets to write his or her name on the chart for that day.
2. Encourage win-win solutions to sibling disputes. Don't always be the mediator; let them work out a solution and be sure to be lavish children with praise when they do.
3. Read Chapter 4 of *The 7 Habits of Happy Kids* book with your child and then complete the Parent's Corner.

## Teen Activities

1. Say you are sorry when you yell, overreact, or accidentally blame one of your children for something he or she didn't do. Modeling this behavior will set expectations for how your child should behave.
2. Set clear expectations with your children about chores, curfew, grades, car privileges, etc. It's hard for you both to win if you are playing by different rules.

## Works for All Ages

1. Think of an ongoing conflict you tend to have with your child (homework, cleaning his or her room, feeding the dog, putting gas in the car) and then discuss a win-win solution to the conflict. Write down the solution and then remind each other of it the next time the situation arises.
2. Remember not to compare your children in front of each other. Try not to say to Marcelo that "Juan always remembers to clear the table." That's win-lose thinking. Instead, just concentrate on praising Juan for a job well done. Marcelo will get the message.
3. Think about your relationship with your child. Is it generally win-win? If not, how is that affecting your family life? What should YOU do differently?

# 5

HABIT 5

## Seek First to Understand, Then to Be Understood®

*Seek First to Understand, Then to Be Understood* means that it is better to listen first and talk second. By taking the time to listen to another person, you reach a higher level of communication. Teaching Habit 5 to young children is done by first considering their age and development. Young children find it difficult to understand another's paradigm (point of view). This habit is best approached by introducing listening as a skill that should be practiced. Learning to listen without interrupting and learning to listen with your ears, your eyes, and your heart will help children build a foundation for Habit 5. Simply put, we have two ears and one mouth so that we can spend more time listening with the intent to understand.

### Younger-Child Activities

1. To better understand how listening can help or hurt a relationship, try “pretend listening” with your child for a few minutes. Your child will be frustrated. Explain what you were doing and discuss how your child felt. Now have your child ignore you when you are talking. Discuss how it makes you feel when you are ignored. Finish the discussion by thinking of ways to let the other person know when you feel you are not being truly listened to. Remind your child that this is also an example of Think Win-Win.
2. Body language can be even more important than words. Play a game with your kids where you each try to guess the other's emotion (happy, sad, angry, frustrated, bored, etc.) without using any words, just body language.
3. Demonstrate how saying the same phrase in a different tone of voice can give the phrase a completely different meaning. Try emphasizing different words in the phrase “I didn't say you did it” and then have your child tell you how the meaning changed.
4. Read Chapter 5 of *The 7 Habits of Happy Kids* book with your child and then complete the Parent's Corner.

### Teen Activities

1. Ask yourself what your biggest listening problem is. Do you “pretend listen”? Do you only listen to give advice or judge? Do you plan what you are going to say instead of really listening? Work to improve your listening skills and model good listening behavior.
2. Is there an issue you and your teen always argue about? If so, go to your teen and say, “Help me understand your point of view.” Then really listen without interruptions. When your child is finished, repeat in your own words what you heard until he or she acknowledges feeling understood. Then it's your turn to speak and your child's turn to listen. You may want to use a “Talking Stick” when you are having this discussion. Only the person holding the Talking Stick is allowed to speak and doesn't pass the stick to the other person until he or she feels understood.
3. Consider asking your teen to let you know when he or she feels you aren't listening. When it happens, thank him or her, listen, and share back and forth until your teen feels understood.



# HABIT 6 Synergize®

*Synergize* is when two or more people work together to create a better solution that either would have thought of alone. It's not your way or my way, but a better way. Talk about the equation:  $1 + 1 = 3$  (or more). How is that possible? 1 person + another person = 2 ideas + many more than either of them would have thought of alone. Synergy is taking good ideas and making them better by working together. Discussions can focus on other examples of synergy in nature, history, literature, and personal experiences. For example, synergy happens in nature when a flock of geese heads south for the winter. They fly in a V formation because due to the updraft, the entire flock can fly farther than if each bird flew alone.

## Younger-Child Activities

- Read Chapter 6 of *The 7 Habits of Happy Kids* book with your child and then complete the Parent's Corner.

## Works for All Ages

1. With your children, choose a problem you may have (like curfew or completing tasks). Use the Synergy Action Plan to summarize your child's solution and your solution: (1) Define the problem. (2) Share your views. (3) Think of solutions. (4) Choose the best solution together. See if you can reach a better solution (the High Way) than either of you would have come up with alone.
2. Institute a "15-minute program" where everyone drops what they are doing and pitches in to work as a team to clean the kitchen, pull weeds in the garden, wash the dishes, sweep the front porch, etc. Cutting out a small block of time where everyone helps makes the work go quicker.
3. If your child has siblings, ask each to identify what they think their brother or sister is really good at, then share the lists with each other and discuss how they could Synergize on homework, chores, playing games, sports, etc. If your child does not have siblings, you can do the same exercise using his or her best friends—or you.



# HABIT 7 **Sharpen the Saw<sup>®</sup>**

*Sharpen the Saw* means to have balance in your life. There is a story of a man who was sawing down a tree and not making a lot of progress. When a passerby asked him why he didn't stop sawing to sharpen his saw, he remarked that he was too busy sawing. Habit 7 reminds us that we are more productive when we are in balance—body, brain, heart and soul. Just like the four tires on a car, if one area is being ignored or overused, the rest will feel the results. For young children, the car analogy is one they understand; a car could not go on fewer than all four tires. Explain the four parts of each person (body, brain, heart, and soul) and how important it is to take care of each part to make them all work better.

## **Younger-Child Activities**

1. Develop a Sharpen the Saw activity center in your home. Include arts-and-crafts supplies, learning games, puzzles, classical music, books, etc.
2. Discuss various ways to Sharpen the Saw in all areas. Ideas might include: body (playing outside, riding your bike), brain (balancing reading with TV watching or making smarter choices about what you watch), heart (making a list of what makes you happy and doing something on the list every day, spending time with special friends and family), and soul (attending religious services, starting a journal).
3. Read inspiring books. (See the book list in the “Additional Resources” section.)
4. Read Chapter 7 of *The 7 Habits of Happy Kids* book with your child and then complete the Parent's Corner.

## **Teen Activities**

1. Encourage your child to keep a regular journal or blog.
2. Subscribe to magazines that have educational value or read good books.
3. Encourage your teen to get in the habit of reading a newspaper every day. Online works too!
4. Make sure you are modeling the behaviors in steps 1–3 yourself.

## **Works for All Ages**

1. Join a gymnasium or start a regular exercise program with your child.
2. Pick an organization to volunteer with for you and your child(ren).
3. Visit a new museum or try a new type of cuisine—expand your horizons and try new things.

# Additional Resources

## Web Resources

[TheLeaderInMeBook.org](http://TheLeaderInMeBook.org)

[TheLeaderInMe.org](http://TheLeaderInMe.org)

[StephenCovey.com](http://StephenCovey.com)

[SeanCovey.com](http://SeanCovey.com)

[7Habits4Teens.com](http://7Habits4Teens.com)

[FranklinCovey.com](http://FranklinCovey.com)

## Parent Book List

***The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People***, Stephen R. Covey

***The 7 Habits of Highly Effective Families***, Stephen R. Covey

***Living the 7 Habits***, Stephen R. Covey

