

Jericho High School

"THE PARENT CORNER"
 Todd A. Benjamin, LCSW



*"If the only tool I have is a hammer,
 everything looks like a nail."*
 Abraham Maslow

October 15, 2009

The 7 Habits of Happy Kids Habit #1: BE PROACTIVE

Parenting in the year 2009 is undoubtedly an extraordinarily demanding job. The challenges of raising teens today can feel like a roller coaster ride with incredible highs and frightening lows. As we stand by our children, we see a world filled with ever-increasing academic demands, economic uncertainty, peer pressure, and social anxiety. Our children need to have strong values, good judgment and personal resiliency to thrive and flourish.

The Parent Corner is a professional publication with the goal of providing Jericho parents with practical tools and effective strategies that can serve to strengthen family ties and protect our most vulnerable members from making unhealthy life choices.

| TOOLBOX SKILLS |
|-------------------------------|
| 1. Be Proactive |
| 2. Begin with the End In Mind |
| 3. Put First Things First |
| 4. Think Win-Win |
| 5. Seek First to Understand |
| 6. Synergize |
| 7. Sharpen The Saw |

Sean Covey, 1998

The toolbox skills that will be presented in this year's *Parent Corner Newsletters* are based on the work of Steven and Sean Covey. The Coveys, a father and son team, have authored a series of books which highlight healthy habits and character building strategies (*The 7 Habits of Happy Kids, The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People, and The 7 Habits of Highly Effective Teens*). These habits are timeless, universal principles of responsibility, service and honesty. The structure of each newsletter will provide you with one new strategy, possible applications, and a personal reflection box.

HABIT # 1: BE PROACTIVE

Being proactive is the key to unlocking the six other habits in our new toolbox. "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" (*Covey, 1998*). Proactive people make choices based on values and reflective thinking.



Reactive people make choices based upon their impulses. Think about a can of soda. Once the soda can is shaken, an explosion is imminent. A reactive person operates in the same manner; once the pressure builds, he erupts. Proactive people think before they act. They know that they can't control all of life's little surprises, but they can control their responses to these events. Once challenged, a proactive person will remain calm, cool, and collected.

The 7 Habits of Happy Kids

You can usually hear the difference between proactive and reactive people by the language they use. Reactive language takes power away from you and gives it to something or someone else. Proactive language puts the remote control back into your own hands and provides you with the opportunity for greater happiness and increased self esteem.



| Reactive Language | Proactive Language |
|---------------------------|----------------------------------|
| That's just the way I am | I can do better than that |
| There is nothing I can do | Let's look at all of our options |
| I have to | I choose to |
| I can't | There has got to be a way |
| You ruined my day | Help me understand your behavior |

Sean Covey, 1998



HABIT # 1 SCENARIO – Shortly after a dear friend has complimented your generosity and kindness, your friend turned down your request to financially sponsor your efforts in your *Habitat for Humanity* project.

HABIT # 1 RESPONSES- Reactive vs. Proactive

1. Reactive Choices

- Tell her off. Let her know that she is no longer your friend.
- Internalize her negative comments and begin to doubt your relationship with her.
- Retaliate by not helping her in the future.



2. Proactive Choices

- Forgive her. Focus on the strengths of your relationship.
- Calmly share how you feel about her response and ask for greater understanding.
- Offer her the opportunity to help you in a non-financial manner.



Reflection: Think of a time when a spouse, child, or other family member responded to you in a "reactive" manner. How did this influence the overall situation? How did this affect your relationship with this person? How might a "proactive" response have changed the outcome?

Reflection: Think of a time when being more proactive could have turned a setback into a triumph.

HABIT # 1 SUMMARY- Being proactive suggests that if we learn to **pause, reflect** and **think** about how we want to respond to difficult situations, we will make better decisions. Teaching our children about the value of being proactive is a good first step toward a healthier tomorrow.

The next issue of *The Parent Corner* will present

Habit # 2 Beginning with the End in Mind

