

Who's pushing your buttons?



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Proactive actions

When his fingers and face were literally burned off in a fiery motorcycle accident, you might have thought he'd give up. Then when he was paralyzed in a freak airplane crash, you'd be sure of it.

But W. Mitchell didn't focus on what he had lost, he focused on what he still could attain. When you say "she made me mad" or "he ruined my day," is it really true? The only one who can ruin your day is you. Stop blaming and making excuses. Focus on what you can control, take responsibility for your emotions ... so you don't hand over the remote control of your life to anyone else.

Hot or cold? Soup or salad? Proactive or reactive?—even if we don't recognize it, we always have a choice. The choice may only be a choice of how we respond to life, but that choice can change our lives. Help your teen take control of his or her life by choosing to respond to life in a positive manner.

- **Watch your language.** We all have the choice to be either proactive and respond to life based on our values, or to be reactive and respond to life based on emotions. Phrases like "My spouse is so inconsiderate!" or "My kids are driving me crazy!" or "I didn't deserve that—it's not my fault" are all reactive. Learn to listen to your language, catch yourself when you are about to say something reactive, and find something proactive to say instead. Encourage your teen to do the same.
- **Encourage self-awareness.** Ask your teen: are you able to stand apart from your thoughts and feelings and examine them? Do you see the connections between your feelings and your actions? Are you able to change your actions despite what you feel? Encourage your teen to think or journal about these self-awareness questions. Self-awareness is the first step toward acting responsibly and proactively.
- **Be able and willing to laugh.** A sense of humor is an important gift which we all have or can develop. The ability to laugh at ourselves is an important part of being proactive because it gives us a way to respond positively to the ups and downs of life. Humor can, of course, be carried too far. Help your teen learn the difference between sarcastic humor that tears people down, and true lighthearted humor that lightens the mood.

"Children learn to smile from their parents." –Shinichi Suzuki

