Be a good role-model

They want to be just like you. Are you being a positive role model?

A role model is someone whose behavior is imitated by others. Of course, there are good role models and bad role models.

We all hope that children have good, strong role models who possess the kind of qualities that make our children want to be (and become) better people. The following 7 characteristics outline a positive role model.

Positive role models:

(1) Model positive choice-making: Little eyes are watching and little ears are listening. When it comes to being a role model, you must be aware that the choices you make don’t only impact you but also the children who regard you as their superhero. Someday, they will be in the same predicament and think to themselves, “What did s/he do when s/he was in the same situation?” When you are a role model it’s not enough to tell your charges the best choices to make. You must put them into action yourself.

(2) Think out loud: When you have a tough choice to make, allow the children to see how you work through the problem, weight the pros and cons, and come to a decision. The process of making a good decision is a skill. A good role model will not only show a child which decision is best, but also how they to come to that conclusion. That way, the child will be able to follow that reasoning when they are in a similar situation.

(3) Apologize and admit mistakes: Nobody’s perfect. When you make a bad choice, let those who are watching and learning from you know that you made a mistake and how you plan to correct it. This will help them to understand that (a) everyone makes mistakes; (b) it’s not the end of the world; (c) you can make it right; and (d) you should take responsibility for it as soon as possible. By apologizing, admitting your mistake, and repairing the damage, you will be demonstrating an important yet often overlooked part of being a role model. (This point began some great conversation on parents and role models in the comments below and here.)

(4) Follow through: We all want children to stick with their commitments and follow through with their promises. However, as adults, we get busy, distracted, and sometimes, a bit lazy. To be a good role model, we must demonstrate stick-to-itiveness and self discipline. That means; (a) be on time; (b) finish what you started; (c) don’t quit; (d) keep your word; and (e) don’t back off when things get challenging. When role models follow through with their goals, it teaches children that it can be done and helps them adopt an “if s/he can do it, so can l” attitude.
(5) **Show respect:** You may be driven, successful, and smart but whether you choose to show respect or not speaks volumes about the type of attitude it takes to make it in life. We always tell children to “treat others the way we want to be treated” and yet, may not subscribe to that axiom ourselves. Do you step on others to get ahead? Do you take your spouse, friends, or colleagues for granted? Do you show gratitude or attitude when others help you? In this case, it’s often the little things you do that make the biggest difference in how children perceive how to succeed in business and relationships.

(6) **Be well rounded:** While we don’t want to spread ourselves too thin, it’s important to show children that we can be more than just one thing. Great role models aren’t just “parents” or “teachers.” They’re people who show curiosities and have varied interests. They’re great learners and challenge themselves to get out of their comfort zones. You may be a father who’s also a student of the martial arts, a great chef, a good sportsman, and a treasured friend. You may be a mother who’s a gifted dancer, a solid rock climber, a celebrated singer, and a curious photographer. When children see that their role models can be many things, they will learn that they don’t need to pigeon-hole themselves in order to be successful.

(7) **Demonstrate confidence in who you are:** Whatever you choose to do with your life, be proud of the person you’ve become and continue to become. It may have been a long road and you may have experienced bumps along the way, but it’s the responsibility of a role model to commemorate the lessons learned, the strength we’ve amassed, and the character they’ve developed. We can always get better, however, in order for children to celebrate who they are, their role models need to show that confidence doesn’t start “5 pounds from now,” “2 more wins on top of this one,” or “1 more possession than I have today.” We must continue to strive while being happy with how far we’ve come at the same time.

While it may seem like a great deal of pressure to be a positive role model; nobody is expecting you to be superhuman. We certainly wouldn’t expect that behavior from the children who are looking to us for answers and guidance—nor would we want them to expect that kind of flawless behavior from themselves or others. You can only do your best. And, if you mess up today, you can always refer back to tip #3 and try again tomorrow. Good role models earn multiple chances from the children who believe in them and know they can do anything if they simply put their mind to it.

Here’s to a Powerful Week!