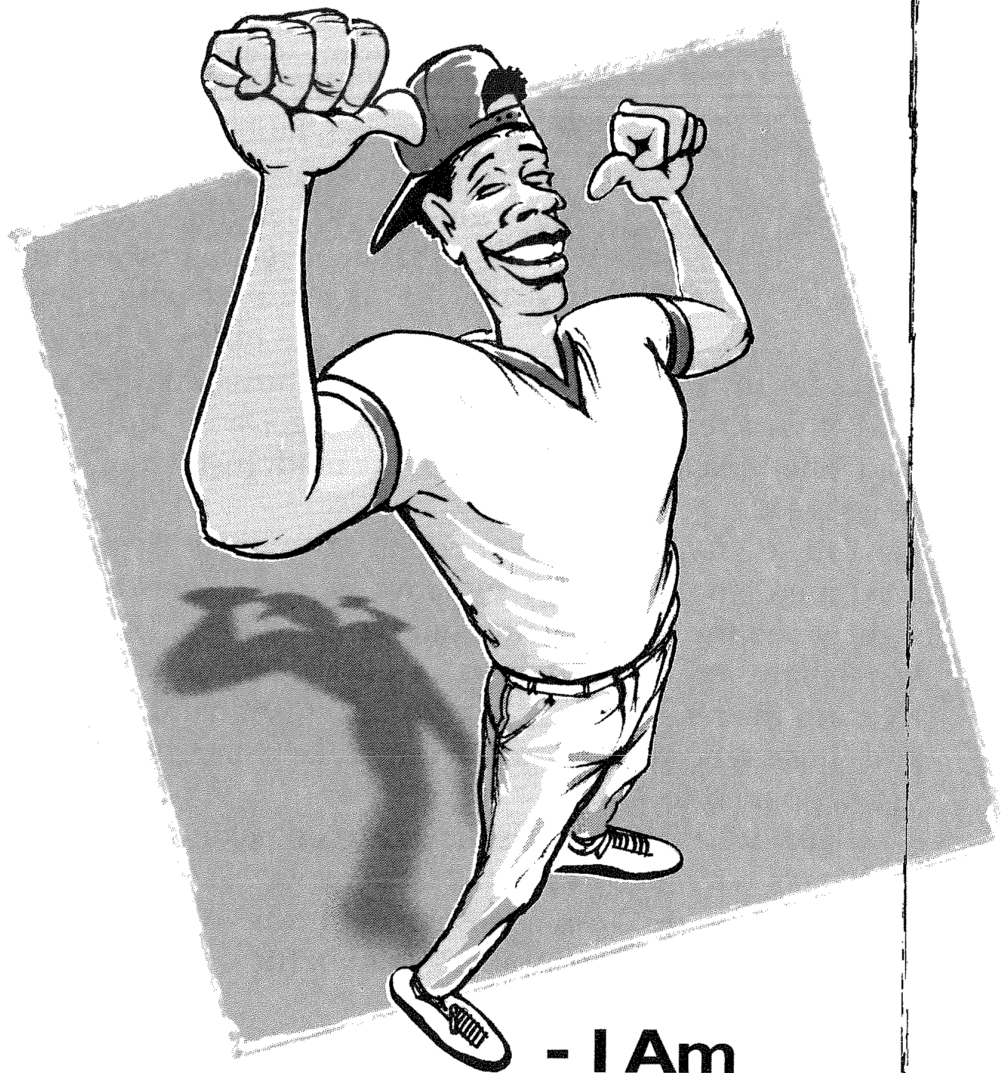


H A B I T

Be Proactive



- I Am
the Force

Proactive or Reactive... the Choice Is Yours

Each day you and I have about 100 chances to choose whether to be

proactive or reactive. In any given day, the weather is bad, you can't find a job, your sister steals your blouse, you lose an election at school, your friend talks behind your back, someone calls you names, your parents don't let you take the car (for no reason), you get a parking ticket on campus, and you flunk a test. So what are you going to do about it? Are you in the habit of reacting to these kinds of everyday things, or are you proactive? The choice is yours. It really is. You don't have to respond the way everyone else does or the way people think you should.

How many times have you been driving down the road when suddenly somebody cuts in front of you, making you slam on your brakes? What do you do? Do you fly off at the mouth? Give 'em the bird? Let it ruin your day? Lose bladder control?

Or do you just let it go? Laugh about it. Move on.

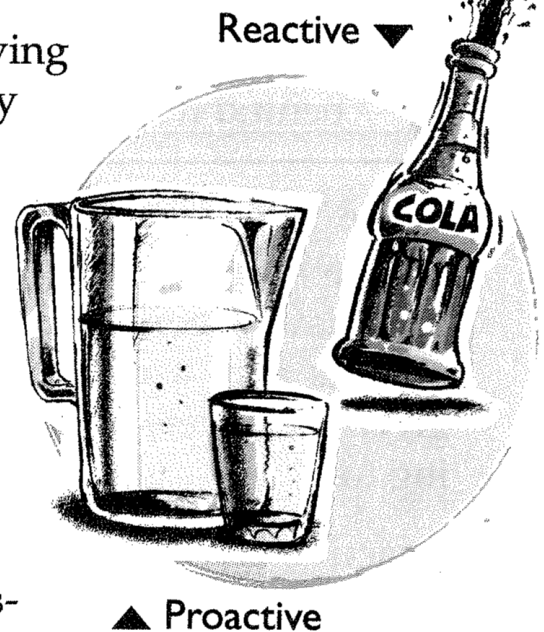
The choice is yours.

Reactive people make choices based on impulse. They are like a can of soda pop. If life shakes them up a bit, the pressure builds and they suddenly explode.

"Hey, you stupid jerk! Get out of my lane!"

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*. Unlike reactive people who are full of carbonation, proactive people are like water. Shake them up all you want, take off the lid, and nothing. No fizzing, no bubbling, no pressure. They are calm, cool, and in control.

"I'm not going to let that guy get me upset and ruin my day."



● **LISTEN TO YOUR LANGUAGE**

You can usually hear the difference between proactive and reactive people by the type of language they use. Reactive language usually sounds like this:

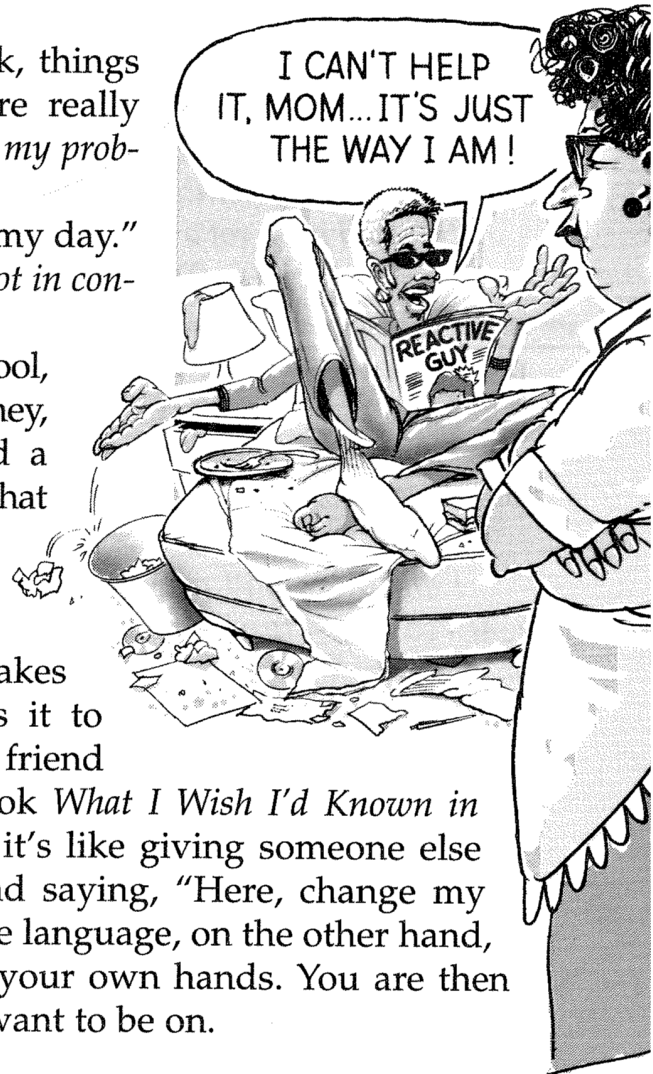
“That’s me. That’s just the way I am.” What they’re really saying is, *I’m not responsible for the way I act. I can’t change. I was pre-determined to be this way.*

“If my boss wasn’t such a jerk, things would be different.” What they’re really saying is, *My boss is the cause of all my problems, not me.*

“Thanks a lot. You just ruined my day.” What they’re really saying is, *I’m not in control of my own moods. You are.*

“If only I attended a different school, had better friends, made more money, lived in a different apartment, had a boyfriend ... then I’d be happy.” What they’re really saying is, *I’m not in control of my own happiness, “things” are. I must have things to be happy.*

Notice that reactive language takes power away from you and gives it to something or someone else. As my friend John Bytheway explains in his book *What I Wish I’d Known in High School*, when you’re reactive it’s like giving someone else the remote control to your life and saying, “Here, change my mood anytime you wish.” Proactive language, on the other hand, puts the remote control back into your own hands. You are then free to choose which channel you want to be on.



REACTIVE LANGUAGE	PROACTIVE LANGUAGE
<i>I'll try</i>	<i>I'll do it</i>
<i>That's just the way I am</i>	<i>I can do better than that</i>
<i>There's nothing I can do</i>	<i>Let's look at all our options</i>
<i>I have to</i>	<i>I choose to</i>
<i>I can't</i>	<i>There's gotta be a way</i>
<i>You ruined my day</i>	<i>I'm not going to let your bad mood rub off on me</i>

● WE CAN CONTROL ONLY ONE THING

The fact is, we can't control everything that happens to us. We can't control the color of our skin, who will win the NBA finals, where we were born, who our parents are, how much tuition will be next fall, or how others might treat us. But there is one thing we *can* control: *how we respond to what happens to us*. And that is what counts! This is why we need to stop worrying about things we can't control and start worrying about things we *can*.

Picture two circles. The inner circle is our circle of control. It includes things we have control over, such as ourselves, our attitudes, our choices, our response to whatever happens to us.

Surrounding the circle of control is the circle of no control. It includes the thousands of things we can't do anything about.

Now, what will happen if we spend our time and energy worrying about things we can't control, like a rude comment, a past mistake, or the weather? You guessed it! We'll feel even more out of control, as if we were victims. For instance, if your sister bugs you and you're always complaining about her weaknesses (something you have no control over), that won't do anything to fix the problem. It'll only cause you to blame your problems on her and lose power yourself.



Elaine Maxwell sums up the entire matter quite well: "Whether I fail or succeed shall be no man's doing but my own. I am the force; I can clear any obstacle before me or I can be lost in the maze. My choice, my responsibility; win or lose, only I hold the key to my destiny."

It's kind of like the old Volkswagen commercials. "On the road of life, there are passengers and there are drivers ... Drivers wanted!"

So let me ask you, are you in the driver's seat of your life or are you merely a passenger? Are you conducting your symphony or simply being played? Are you acting like a can of soda pop or a bottle of water?

After all that's been said and done, *the choice is yours!*