



What Does it Mean to Be a Good Role Model for Young People?

From time to time, when you were growing up, you may have heard the phrase: “Do as I say, not as I do.” Often children are confronted with the confusion at the difference between the guidance adults give them and the way those same adults interact with others.

The behavior of adults has a big impact on children. They see what you are doing. When they admire and respect you, they model your behavior. They want to be like the respected adults in their lives—mom, dad, teacher, or youth minister, for example—the people they look up to and care about. You could be one of those people. Knowing this, it is time to look carefully at your own actions with the children and adults around you.

Being a good role model requires us to rethink some of the ways we act and interact. Adults have a great deal of freedom in our society, and we take pride in preserving that freedom. The freedom to act according to our choices also includes the responsibility to appropriately restrict our own actions. Sometimes putting limits on our own behavior can be a powerful model for children—teaching them how to manage their own wants and desires.

Here are some examples of ways that adults can be good role models for children:

- Don't possess, use, or be under the influence of alcohol at any time while you are in the presence of children. Be moderate in all use of alcohol.
- Don't possess, use, or be under the influence of illegal drugs at any time.
- Don't strike, spank, shake, or slap children, youths, or other adults.
- Don't humiliate, ridicule, threaten, or degrade children, youths, or other adults.
- Don't touch a child, youth, or other adult in a sexual or other inappropriate manner.
- Don't bully others.
- Don't use profanity or sexually explicit language in the presence of children and/or youth and don't show sex-related pictures to children and youth.
- Don't do things that deliberately hurt others.
- Never meet alone with a child in a secluded area.
- Respect other people's boundaries. Listen to and respect any person who says “no.”
- Encourage group activities and include others who are frequently left out.
- Speak kindly about others and don't get drawn into gossip.

Children and young people want to be like the adults in their lives—and they are always watching. They will repeat what they hear and what they see. In order to be a good role model, make sure that you are modeling for them how to do things in a safe manner and how to interact with others in a thoughtful and respectful manner.

Be someone whose actions say to children “Do as I say and as I do.”

1) Your 13 year-old-son, Grant, has always admired his older brother Mitch. They are very close and enjoy spending time together. Mitch attends a local college and is engaged to marry his high school sweetheart, Rachel, in three months. One evening after dinner, you pass by your family room and see that the kids have rented a movie. It's dark in the room, but you can clearly see Mitch and Rachel intimately kissing on the sofa behind Grant. Although Grant is engrossed in the movie, you believe that Mitch and Rachel are behaving inappropriately and setting a bad example for Grant. What's the best way to manage this situation?

- A) Ignore what's going on. Grant is watching the movie, not his brother. And, anyway, it's all part of learning and growing up.
- B) Step into the family room and explain to Mitch and Rachel--in a calm tone--that they are not behaving as good role models for Grant. Tell them that you expect them to consider their actions any time they are with Grant so they can provide him with the best and smartest examples of how to behave.
- C) Flip on the lights and proceed to give a strong lecture on the appropriateness of Mitch and Rachel's behavior.
- D) Break up the gathering. Send Grant to his room, and instruct Mitch to take Rachel home. Tell them that you will not tolerate those kinds of activities under your roof.
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