



Children's Positive Habits of the Mind

12 ways of thinking that have a major impact on their emotions, behaviour, achievement and relationships.



Ever hear the expression “thinking makes it so”? William Shakespeare penned the phrase to make the point that the way we think has a huge influence over the way we feel about what happens to us. This idea is especially important for understanding not only our own emotions, but those of our children.

For example, consider how two different children, Jack and Harry, feel about not getting invited to a classmate's birthday party. Jack feels terrible and gets depressed whereas Harry while disappointment and concerned, does not get so down and despondent.

The reason for the different emotional responses of the two boys to the same event can be found in the different ways the boys think. When things go badly for Jack, he is in the habit of putting himself down thinking “I need people to like me and to be popular. When I'm not, I'm a loser.”

On the other hand, Harry has a different way of thinking when bad stuff happens. Different from Jack, when something bad happens. When something happens to Harry, he reacts differently. He has the habit of

accepting himself while disliking the bad thing that has happened.

His typical way of thinking sounds something like: “While I strongly prefer people to like me and to be popular, I don't need to be liked and popular all the time. And when I am not as popular as I wish to be, I accept who I am and know that I am still a worthwhile person.”

Here's what we've learned. Even children of very young ages develop habits in the way they think. These “Habits of the mind” have a tremendous impact on their emotions, their behaviour and as a result their school achievement, relationships and emotional well-being.

Habits of the mind are the beliefs people hold about themselves, other people and the world. While people are often unaware of their Habits of Mind, they nonetheless guide the way young people think about what happens which, in turn, largely determines how they feel and behave.

In the picture opposite, you will notice there are five “levers” representing five of the twelve Habits of the Mind we teach in You Can Do It! Education.



You will notice that some of the levers are in the low position showing that the Habit of the Mind is not well developed. Other Habits of the Mind are in the medium or high positions. You will also see that the arms of the boy stretch to control the levels. This demonstrates that young people have the power to strengthen their Habits of the Mind.

In You Can Do It! Education, parents (and teachers) are encouraged to teach, model and reinforce the following 12 Habits of the Mind in their children. As you examine each one, consider how strongly each of these Habits of the Mind are developed in one or more of your children. If they are not strongly developed, discuss with your child the way of thinking that is described in each illustration below.



1. Accepting Myself

(sometimes called "Self-Acceptance")

Child Thinks: When things go bad or people are mean to me, I know I am not bad or a loser. I still accept myself. I am still proud of myself no matter what.



2. Taking Risks

Child Thinks: I prefer to be successful, but I don't need to be all the time. I know it's okay to make mistakes when learning something new.



3. Being Independent

(sometimes called "Non-approval Seeking")

Child Thinks: I want to be liked but I don't need to be liked by everyone all the time. It's important for me to speak up and do what I think is right even if my classmates or others think I'm stupid or that there is something wrong with me.



4. I Can Do It

(sometimes called "Optimism")

Child Thinks: I am more likely to be successful than to fail. When I have been successful it is because I did my best.



5. Giving Effort

Child Thinks: I am more likely to be successful than to fail. When I have been successful it is because I tried hard.



6. Working Tough

Child Thinks: I prefer but don't always need things to be fun and exciting. To be successful, I sometimes have to do things that are not easy or fun.



7. Setting Goals

Child Thinks: Setting a goal can help me to be successful. Set my long-term goals big, make my short-term goals realistic and my daily goals specific.



8. Planning My Time

Child Thinks: It's good to plan my time so that I get everything done on time.



9. Being Tolerant of Others

Child Thinks: I prefer people to act fairly and considerately. Even though I do not like it, I can put up with people who act poorly. And I accept people who are different.



10. Thinking First

Child Thinks: It's best to think about what I should say and do rather than lashing out..



11. Playing by the Rules

Child Thinks: Following rules protects everyone's rights. It makes the world a better place to live and learn.



12. Social Responsibility

Child Thinks: It's important to care for others, to treat everyone with respect, and to help build a world with fairness and justice for all.