



# Initiative

Individuals with initiative:

- Are “go-getters.” Each day, for them, represents an opportunity to take on new challenges and risks.
- Are excited about what today holds and look forward with great anticipation to what tomorrow will bring.
- Are often creative and can find more than one solution in a situation.
- Are often planners who carefully think through life’s ups and downs and adjust accordingly.

As an adult in the lives of children, it is important to set an example of eagerness and curiosity that a spirit of initiative will bring. Initiative relates to adult resilience—faced with difficulty, those with initiative will make decisions and act upon them to move from a state of “what is” to a state of “what can be.”

The time to begin thinking about improving (or maintaining) your initiative is now. Don’t put it off for tomorrow. Take time to review your initiative items again, and use this chapter to begin building or renewing your level of initiative.



## 1. I communicate effectively with those around me.

Reread the statement above, and this time underline the word *effectively*. It is the key word in the sentence. Many of us communicate often throughout our day. We communicate with those in our homes when we begin our day by saying good morning, and we engage in brief conversation over breakfast. We communicate with those in our neighborhood when we wave

hello and wish them a great day. We communicate with those on our commute to work when a not-so-nice person cuts us off in traffic. Once we arrive at work, we communicate with co-workers, parents, and children. But if you were to replay all the different ways in which you communicate (and remember, we communicate both verbally and nonverbally), just how effectively are you communicating?

Consider the strategies below to help you better communicate with those around you.

**STRATEGY 1: Seek to Identify**

Is there one particular person with whom you find it very difficult to communicate? Write that person's name in the space below.

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Now, answer these questions.

Why do you find it difficult to communicate with this person? Is it because you feel that he will not listen to you? Is it because you have tried before and you feel the person did not hear you? Or is it because such strong feelings and emotions surface that you would rather just not try? Whatever the reason, spend some time reflecting in the space below.

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I find it so difficult to communicate with this person because

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## STRATEGY 2: Communicate Using “I” Messages

In the last exercise, you noted some of the reasons you find it difficult to communicate with the person you identified. Moving forward, you may want to try the strategy outlined below when communicating not only with the person you identified but also with others as well.

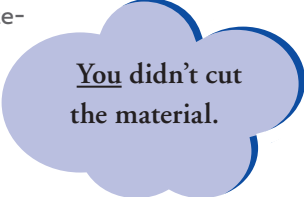
When you communicate with others using “I” messages or “I” statements, you talk with them about a problem without accusing them of being the cause of the problem.

Consider this example:

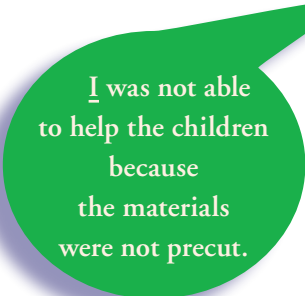
Your co-teacher did not precut the materials for the afternoon art project as the two of you had agreed she would. You say to her, “You didn’t cut the material for our afternoon art project!”

While your statement is true, beginning the statement with *you* may immediately cause your co-teacher to become both defensive and maybe even a little angry. When communicating using “I” messages, you would instead say, “I was not able to help the children complete their art project this afternoon because the materials were not precut.” Your co-teacher may then say, “I

apologize. I completely forgot I had to cover in the preschool classroom this afternoon. I will cut the materials out this evening so we can finish the project with the children tomorrow.”



You didn’t cut the material.



I was not able to help the children because the materials were not precut.

Communicating using “I” messages will not solve all of your communication challenges, but it will make your communication sound less accusatory. Your message will be more effective.

### **STRATEGY 3: Put Pen to Paper**

If you find it difficult to verbally communicate, another option is to put pen to paper. When using this approach, allow your thoughts and feelings to flow onto the paper.

You can send your thoughts via e-mail, text message, or U.S. mail. If you are not sure of what to say or how to say it, allow yourself some time to write your message. If your message has been written in a spirit of anger or frustration, set it aside for a day or two. After a few days have passed, reread the letter. If you are comfortable with what you have written, send it. If for any reason you want to make some changes, allow yourself to once again let your thoughts and feelings flow from pen to paper.



## **2. I try many different ways to solve a problem.**

If at first you don't succeed, try and try again. For many of us, this is a lesson we were taught throughout our childhood. As adults, we may have strayed from this important strategy for building a more resilient spirit.

When we try many ways to solve a problem, we empower ourselves. Life will inevitably bring us many ups and downs. The key to making the best out of life is successfully managing our way through life's mountain highs and valley lows.