

YOUR REPUTATION CAN BLESS OR BITE YOU

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Reputation is an extremely powerful thing. The dictionary defines it as 'the estimation in which a person is regarded by others'. A person of good repute (or character) is one who is esteemed, respected and trusted. A person of ill repute may be known to disregard authority, be dishonest, disrespectful, immoral or unethical. Either way, every individual has a reputation.

Developing a good reputation is similar to a credit score. To have a good score we have to earn it by being diligent in paying our bills on time. This is a proactive process, requiring careful budgeting and not spending more than we earn. There are major advantages to having great credit. If we do not, or cannot, pay our bills in a timely manner our credit gets dinged. This results in a low score, whereupon our spending options become restricted. It takes time to eradicate a poor score and it takes hard work to re-establish good credit.

Our reputation comes from learned behavior. Initially, children are most influenced by those nearest to them. They do what their parents do more often than what their parents tell them they should do. They adopt their parents' attitudes, beliefs and ethics. As they grow, children continue to be influenced by those they admire, often outside the home or on the media. This may be a great thing, but sometimes not. I think most parents become concerned over their child's behavior when it contravenes the training they have received at home.

So, how do we cultivate an excellent reputation? The secret is in establishing strong family values. Parents need to decide what principles or standards they wish their family to live by. These values need to be written down and explained so that all family members understand the expectations. The family home should be a safe environment to learn, to make mistakes and be encouraged in all efforts to demonstrate the values set by the family. Reputation begins at home.

Not only do individuals cultivate their reputation at home, but families collectively also develop a reputation. Wouldn't it be wonderful to hear that your family is known for its great volunteer spirit, its pursuit of excellence, its kindness to others, or its concern for homeless animals for example?

It is very important for us as parents all to consider our own reputation. How do people describe us? Is it favorable? Should we make some changes? If we want our children to develop an excellent reputation, then we must demonstrate the very same thing ourselves. It is often a good exercise to think about the attributes of people we admire and work towards being like them. We can even ask them how they 'do it' and request their help if necessary.

So what do you do to restore a tarnished reputation? It may require asking forgiveness. It might require asking for help in making wiser decisions or in better managing personal negative traits. It might require getting a second job to repair financial damage. It often involves working through the consequences of poor decisions and earning others' trust. This doesn't happen overnight but when people can see positive change occurring, they are much more likely to be receptive to your efforts.

It is essential to be positive role models to our children. It is essential to give them the tools, training and the practice to establish an excellent reputation. It is never too late to change our attitudes, beliefs and ethics. It is not a bad thing for your children to observe how you make positive changes in your life to restore your reputation. We are all on a journey. Let's set our children on that road towards an outstanding reputation so that they can influence the generations to come.

If you have any comments or questions on this subject, please do not hesitate to contact us at sally@forefrontfamilies.org. We invite you to also check out our website at www.forefrontfamilies.org and our blog site at www.forefrontfamilies.blogspot.com for further assistance.