Dear Grown-Up:

I’m a kid, working on growing up, too. It’s a tough job! I love being a kid. There’s so much to learn, and I need your help.

Sometimes this world seems scary. I see news that frightens me and makes me sad. (I hear you say that, too!) But it’s also about how you act at my soccer game, or when you drive. Or what happens at home when I’m trying to go to sleep.

I hear and see it all ... even when you think I can’t.

Grown-up, you’re my role model. Through what you say and do, I’m learning from you.

Do you know Great Circle is helping to take care of 27,000 kids and families this year? They know a lot about strengthening kids and families. And about being a good role model.

So, thanks for taking the time to read this and doing your best to guide me properly. Because I represent all kids. And your grown-up world will someday become ours.

Sincerely, A Kid
Being a Role Model in Today’s World

1

Be aware.
Have you ever watched a child mimic an adult action, maybe even one of yours? Children learn by example. Being a good role model doesn't mean being perfect. But it does require that when we’re in a child’s presence we realize we’re their real-time, living role models. Check your status. What are kids seeing or hearing from you? What might you do better?

2

Keep the big picture in mind.
The American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry (AACAP) defines a role model as a person who serves as an example by influencing others. That’s a broad definition. While parents or caregivers carry the bulk of that responsibility, children also find role models in almost every encounter: at school, with relatives or friends, through social media, on television, in music and even on the soccer field. And that’s not the whole list. It’s impossible to control everything a child sees or hears, but every grown-up can choose how to act. And, parents can help children find a healthy balance. Encourage involvement in positive activities. Remember that just spending quality time with your child can be the greatest gift of all.

3

Talk about it.
Here’s helpful advice from the AACAP:

• Talk often about good role models who show positive qualities and good influence on others.
• Be clear about what you consider to be negative role models, who also can influence children. Widely admired public figures can make poor personal choices. Young children may assume this is typical, safe and acceptable. Emphasize that inappropriate behavior, violence, sexuality, race and gender stereotypes, or drug and alcohol abuse are unacceptable.
• Remind children that everyone has good and bad qualities, and anyone can make a mistake. Explain that it’s important to apologize and learn from our mistakes. Talk about healthier, more positive ways a situation could have been handled.

4

Don’t wait until it’s too late.
If you feel a child is being negatively influenced, help them identify better role models. Remind them they don’t have to do everything the role model does. They can copy what he or she likes, and still be him or herself. A qualified mental health professional can help if you’re troubled by changes in your child’s behavior or attitude that may be due to his or her choice of role model.

5

Join the Circle for family strength!
Reach out when you, your child or family needs help or is in crisis. That’s a sign of strength! Great Circle offers many services and resources. Learn more at www.greatcircle.org or follow us on Facebook and Twitter.

Great Circle is an agency that provides a unique spectrum of behavioral health services to children and families. With specialized programs and highly-trained professionals, we provide hope to those in difficult circumstances throughout Missouri and beyond.

greatcircle.org | 1-844-424-3577 (GCHelps) | #MOFamilyStrength