

Etiquette Business Challenges

Written by Cindy Post Senning

Sometimes when I tell people what I do, they sort of laugh and say, “Manners? Does anybody really pay attention to manners anymore?” What I have found is that many, many people do pay attention. However, there are definite challenges that come along with promoting etiquette/manners in the today’s world.

Challenge One



Convincing people that the small amount of extra time and effort it takes to treat people with respect, consideration and kindness is worth it in so many ways – social, business, and emotional. With the hurried pace we all experience these days, it is often manners that get left by the wayside. It does take a few minutes to write that thank you note. Stopping to greet someone may mean a few minutes before you get to your desk. Waiting for everyone to be seated at the table before you start eating may make the dinner hour slightly longer. Those extra minutes do add up. But the gain you make in improving your day, your own mood, and your relationships is worth hours more than those few extra minutes. The challenge is helping others to see that!

Challenge Two

Getting the message out that there are standards of behavior and that being flexible does not mean acting below those standards. Flexibility is what allows us to be respectful of the diversity of customs and standards that are part of the world today, but we never suggest that people should behave below the standard. For example, standards of dress vary from work place to work place. It’s important to be flexible as you choose what to wear depending on the culture of the office where you are working. However, no matter what the culture, you would not wear something that falls below the universal dress standard that requires clean and not ragged.

Challenge Three

Getting the message out that while *manners* change, the *principles* do not. While manners are very different today than they were yesterday, and while manners differ from region to region, the principles of respect, consideration and honesty are timeless and universal; they are exactly the ones that guided Emily Post's advice and that guide manners across regions today. The manners are simply how we articulate the principles in our relationships with others: we show respect by greeting each other with a smile, we show consideration by holding the door for our friend; we show honesty by finding the positive truth rather than telling a white lie. "Oh my gosh, I got started a little late; I'm so sorry!" rather than "The traffic was awful" when it really wasn't.

Some manners that have gone by the wayside as society changes:

1. No more manners for dealing with chaperons (kids today think chaperons are parents on field trips).
2. We don't leave calling cards on silver platters on certain days of the week.
3. Kids don't call their fathers by their title and last name.
4. Women do go to social events without gloves.
5. We include reply cards in wedding invitations.
6. Kids are both seen and heard at the dinner table.

There are many more manners that have gone by the wayside AND there are plenty of new ones. Ask your kids what manners they think should be considered when we talk about texting. At first they won't have any but if you ask them what would be rude or disrespectful they'll think of several. Talking about the principles is a great way to get kids talking about manners.

Challenge Four

A reporter once commented to me that I must have the most perfectly set table ever. The thing is that I don't even have a dining room or kitchen table. My children learned their "table" manners eating on trays on their laps. They still learned the importance of manners and enjoying good food and conversation at the same time. They know how to handle their utensils, and they know to chew with their mouths closed. Ours was an informal home with a custom of informality, *but* we were always respectful and considerate and knew that manners were an essential skill for everyone in the family.

The informality associated with asking guests to remove their shoes in your home or an adult

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asking a child to call them by their first name does not imply rudeness. However, informality also does not mean you don't need to be careful of another person's home or respectful to an adult. Calling someone by their first name if they've requested it simply suggests informality not disrespect. This is a difficult concept and I believe it accounts for much of the discussion about how much rudeness there is in today's world. I'm not sure there is. I know so many people of so many ages who are polite, respectful, and considerate. I do agree that there is a greater level of informality which requires us to be even more mindful of the way we treat each other. Unless we take the time and care that "polite" behavior requires – formal or informal, we may easily slip into rudeness. All I am saying is that we don't need to revert to the formality of days gone by in order to be a polite society. We can be informal and polite at the same time.

So, whether you're at a backyard barbecue in jeans and a tee shirt or a formal dance in a tuxedo, treat everyone with respect and consideration, mind your manners, and have a great time.

This article originally appeared as a series of posts on Cindy's parenting blog, [The Gift of Good Manners](#)