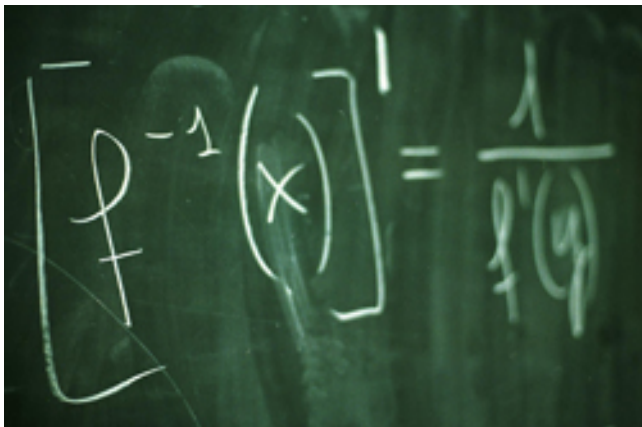


The Etiquette Equation

Written by Cindy Post Senning



The kids I talk to ask me if it gets boring writing about manners all the time.

If writing about manners really just was about keeping track of a bunch of rules, it really would be pretty boring. But it's not. I actually write about etiquette. I like to think about etiquette as an equation: Etiquette = Manners + Principles. As in any equation, all parts are necessary to make it work. The manners are the tools or skills that you use to show the principles that are the foundation of etiquette : respect, consideration, and honesty. You really can't have etiquette without both.

Also, etiquette is about relationships – it's about how we get along with each other. That's what I like writing about. For example: Peggy and I wrote a book about table manners in order to give kids the tools they need to make the most of meals together with family or friends. We also wanted to show kids the other part of mealtime. If meals were really just about eating, we would do it on our own, in private and most of the manners wouldn't matter. But we don't. Meals are also social occasions, so there is an art to mealtime. The art is dynamic, changing and really the most important thing. We like helping people find the art in mealtime. For instance, one of our favorite questions and answers:

Question: Sometimes I feel frustrated that I never get to see my mom at dinner anymore. We used to eat together every night but then she got a job and isn't home for dinner. I miss that. What can we do?

Answer: A meal together doesn't have to be dinner. Maybe breakfast on weekends can offer the opportunity for a meal together. During the week breakfast might be a piece of toast, some juice and an apple or banana on the way out the door. But on a weekend – everyone can sleep in a little and then sit down together to a stack of pancakes, maple syrup, bacon or sausage, juice, hot chocolate, and a dish of fruit. Take the time to share plans for the day, rehash the week just past, and figure out what's going on in each other's lives. It can be a special way to

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start the day.

The challenge of helping this young person and hundreds of others like him solve their relationship problems with etiquette is what keeps me going.