

## One Step to Civil Discourse

Written by Cindy Post Senning

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All the recent talk about civil discourse got me thinking. Certainly improving the civil discourse in politics is so important. And bringing civil discourse to the business table will surely improve things in the business world. But how do we get there? What needs to happen in order to change the nature of our discourse – wherever it is?

I wish I had all the answers, but I don't. However, I know one answer for sure. If we introduce our children to civil discourse at home, in our schools, and in the community, they will, be more likely to bring it to the table in their adult life.

Listen:

Mother to father: "You say the dumbest things."

Father to son: "I was so embarrassed by that move you made in the game. What's the matter with you anyway?"

Teacher to student: "Take this report to the office."

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No magic here – no magic words, no respect, no kindness, no civility. Those are essential ingredients to civil discourse and they change the nature of the dialogue.

Now listen:

Mother to father: “What was that you just said? I didn’t quite get it.”

Father to son: “That was an unusual move you made in the game. What were you hoping it would do?”

Teacher to student: “Please take this report to the office. Thanks.”

It’s up to us – parents, teachers, and everyone in society – to show our kids how the discourse changes with just a little extra thought. Use those “magic” words that change a demand to a request and show appreciation for a job well done. Re-frame a comment to the positive rather than the negative. Create a culture of civility and respect in the home, school, and community. I do know that’s one way we begin to improve the level of civil discourse in our country and we would all benefit.

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