When one of my colleagues sent me Susan Gregory Thomas' MSNBC.com article *Today's Tykes: Secure Kids or Rudest in History?*
Parents' focus on building self-esteem may neglect compassion for others, I read it with great interest.

I am often asked if I think kids are ruder today than they used to be.

I have to say that though I have no quantitative data that accurately answers that question, I do know from talking to many parents, teachers, and kids and viewing a number of surveys that there is an increasing concern with how kids and young adults behave in public, in school and on the job.

Based on my experiences as a teacher, school nurse, principal, and etiquette writer and consultant, I do have some distinct opinions: I think the kids who behave in ways we consider rude and disrespectful create a bad name for all kids. Their behaviors make such a negative impression, we lose sight of the legions of kids who are working their way through difficult times.

- I know that what parents do and how they behave has significant influence on what their kids do. I ask kids of all ages how they show respect and consideration for others; how others demonstrate respect for them; and then I ask them how they know how to be respectful and considerate to others. Almost 100% of the time, kids tell me they learn it at home.

- I know that the values kids learn at home are either reinforced or contradicted in schools and in the media. Part of the work for parents is to help their kids sort out those contradictions.

- I also believe that in this incredibly busy world we've constructed parents don't make the time to be intentional about teaching the manners we use to show respect, consideration and honesty.

- And I believe that parents do need to make the time to work with their kids. Understanding respect, consideration, and honesty is essential to being able to create and nurture good relationships. It is one of the most important things we can teach our kids.

- I believe we do our kids a great disservice if we do not help them appreciate that they are not the only/most important person in this world and that treating others in a manner that shows we believe they are important is at the core of strong relationships.

I believe it is a good thing that people are expressing concern about kids and rudeness.

The manners and principles of good etiquette are learned behaviors. We are not born knowing the things to do to show respect. We learn them. Perhaps the concern we see about kids and rudeness will move parents towards intentionally teaching these values. At The Emily Post Institute we have seen an increase in people asking about etiquette classes for kids, requests for the business etiquette seminars we teach, and for interviews about an expanding variety of etiquette topics.

People are concerned, but I believe the concern is cause for celebration. Let's act on that concern. Each one of us has the capacity to act in respectful and considerate ways. We should start with our own kids. It's like a ripple. Let's get the ripple going in the right direction. Our ability to do so is going to be the ultimate gift to our kids and to ourselves.

(You can read the comments on the survey noted in Ms. Thomas' article here .)