



Family Values

Respect

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Is it possible that American culture is suffering from a deficit of respect? One only has to review some of the more popular TV and radio shows to support this contention. How else do we explain shows that are designed to reject or shame contestants, such as *Survivor* and *Weakest Link*? If this were not the case, would people continue to tune in to The Jerry Springer Show or listen to Howard Stern, both of whom thrive on embarrassing and even intimidating people or pitting them against one another? Frequently “freedom of speech” is used by these “personalities” to justify inconsiderate and hurtful behavior.

Add to this mixture the fact that there is a growing amount of research to suggest that young people who are regularly subjected to bullying and harassment (not treated with respect) are at a greater risk of killing themselves and/or others. Not a very pretty picture. Indeed respect is important. It is paramount that we encourage and model behavior that “honors people and gives them the dignity they deserve.” With such an attitude, consideration for others becomes more important than “inalienable rights.” When we show respect, people feel valued and affirmed. They also are more likely to respond in kind. It is equally important that we have self-respect and not let people treat us in a disparaging or abusive manner. We need to know where to draw the line and how to remove ourselves from situations that are abusive (disrespectful of us).

The following are some suggestions that might assist you in reinforcing respect as a core virtue:

1. **Remember the Golden Rule** – Do unto others as you would have them do unto you. This should be the determining factor in how you treat others.
2. **Know that you are a child of God and created in God’s Image.** You do not stand alone but share this birthright with all human beings.

3. **Set limits with people who take advantage of or abuse you.** Be firm, yet compassionate. Remove yourself from a bad situation, if necessary. Do not seek revenge.
4. **Treat your spouse and other adults with respect.** Modeling respect is the most effective way to teach respect in our family, our church and our community.
5. **Let your children and the children of others know that they are valued.** When children know that they are important and belong, they realize that they are deserving of respect. It helps to call them by name—that is what God does in baptism.
6. **Be clear with your children about your expectations.** Let them know that you expect them to show respect. Good manners are never inappropriate.
7. **Honor the elderly.** Remember the Fourth Commandment, which includes the promise of longevity. We need to honor our elders and appreciate what it is they have to offer.
8. **Advocate for the fair treatment of all and speak out against “bullying” behavior.** Do this in a way that is not aggressive. Although it might work to fight fire with fire, bullying breeds bullying.
9. **Reach out to people who are alone and seem to be left out.** Do not do so out of pity, but to discover what they have to offer and what their strengths are.
10. **Pray daily** that God, who is the author of Respect, will help you respect yourself and others.

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