

## Chapter 12

# Respect Begins at Home but Travels Well

*Respect is everything. When people are treated with disrespect it makes them burn inside. They think, what can I do to make those folks respect me? They want to demand it. You can't demand respect. People respect you because of the way you act. Because of the way you treat other people. Most guys on the street think that respect is the same thing as fear. If someone fears you it means someone respects you. That's wrong thinking. If I'm afraid of some madman it doesn't mean that I respect him, it means that I don't want to be around him and I don't trust him for a second. You can turn your back on someone you respect, you can trust that guy. You can't turn your back on the one you fear, the one you think is just a little strange in the head. Respect and fear have nothing to do with each other. To be treated with real respect makes you feel like you are someone and something. When people slam the door in your face, or treat you badly because of the way you look, that's disrespect. Aside from just being healthy and free, there is nothing higher than respect.*

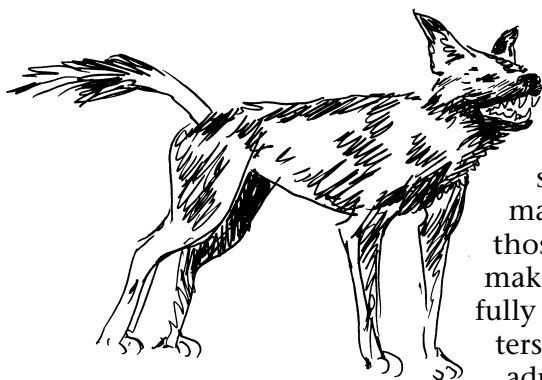
*Excerpt from a conversation with a 19-year-old prison inmate*

What is respect, exactly? Respect is an expression of caring. When you show respect to someone, you are showing them that you care, and vice versa. If you respect a person, you think that he is worthy of your approval. Respect often starts at home with your parents, brothers, sisters, grandparents and other family members.

Unconsciously, you constantly show others how you feel about them by the way you behave and by your body language. How do you feel when your friends are huddled together talking

and they make room for you? How about when someone bumps into you in the hall and they say *excuse me*? Have you ever felt disrespected by someone? Has anyone ever rolled their eyes when you spoke up in class? Have you ever been in line and had someone cut in front of you?

Can you think of anyone who likes to be treated disrespectfully? Most people think that it is important to be respected. Let's take a closer look.



### **Hee, Hee, Hee, Haw, Haw, Haw: Is It Really Funny?**

Watching television after school or in the evening, you may get lots of laughs, but what are those laughs about? Many TV shows make the person who acts disrespectfully the star of the show. The characters of young kids, teens and even adults are often saying and doing

really disrespectful things to one another. They use hip language, don't want to wait their turn, and make lots of jokes at another person's expense.

It's not puzzling then when you see people in public being rude to each other, screaming at each other from their car windows, not looking at one another in the eyes when they talk, and talking rudely to clerks behind the counters at grocery stores and malls. The message is: *it's okay to be rude, as long as you get what you want!* It's okay to make jokes that make other people feel like fools, as long as your friends laugh.

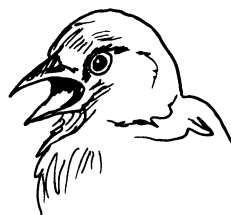
We often see this problem at school. In many cases students are trying to be funny, like on TV, and they don't realize that they are actually being disrespectful. One day a student shouted loudly, just as the release bell rang, *Put the chalk down and step away from the blackboard!* When the student was kept after class, he said, *I didn't mean to be rude, I was just trying to be funny.*

Later we talked to a group of students about the difference between being rude and disrespectful. This is what they said:

*Lots of kids are rude to their parents at home. They are allowed to do and say whatever they want. Their parents get mad, but they don't do*

anything. One of my best friends is really disrespectful to his mom. He said that she knows there is nothing she can do about it, so she just lets him. Then he comes to school and acts the same way with his teachers. He has no respect for anyone. He is really nice as long as he likes you and he gets what he wants, but the second things go wrong he starts running his mouth. He's totally out of control. Girls in classes laugh at his jokes, but the truth is that none of them really like him, they just laugh so that the next joke won't be on them.

Eddy, 15



When other kids are rude to the teacher in class it's embarrassing. I respect the teachers who don't tolerate rudeness. It's just another form of disrespect. I don't want to be in a room where everyone is talking and joking, I can't get anything done like that. I especially hate walking in the halls between classes because students use bad language, and scream at each other and walk in big groups. I hate it. I wish that we had more respect for each other in school.

Tiffany, 14

Respect should be natural. People should treat each other the way they want to be treated. It's so easy. If everyone followed that basic rule the world would be a much better place to be a resident.

Chris, 14



When you show respect to people the message is clear: you care.

## Why Does Respect Begin at Home?

The home is the first place where you learn to get along with other people. If you ask most psychologists why you behave the way you do, they will tell you: most behavior is learned. Believe it or not, you learned, somehow or another, to treat others respectfully or disrespectfully. You also learned whether or not you should expect to be treated with respect by others.

Do you treat your family members with respect? Just to clear

up any doubts, let's take a closer look at how respectful and disrespectful behavior looks.

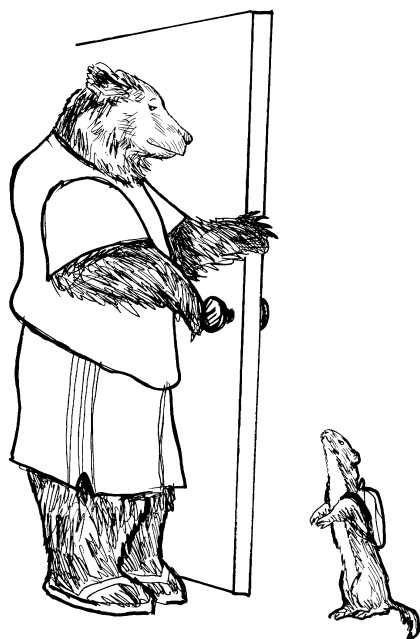
## Showing Respect at Home

- ☺ *When you see your parents after being at school all day you greet them.*
- ☺ *You look at your family members when they talk to you.*
- ☺ *You don't scream at your brothers or sisters or call them names when they make you mad.*
- ☺ *When your parents ask you to do something you don't want to do you don't grumble or curse or give a list of reasons why you shouldn't have to help.*
- ☺ *You speak with a respectful tone of voice to your parents when they ask you questions, or want to talk about a hot issue.*
- ☺ *You don't slam your door, even when you feel like it.*
- ☺ *You respect someone else's space and don't take things without asking.*
- ☺ *When you borrow something, you take care of it and return it to the family member who lent it to you.*

## Showing Respect in Public

If you act respectfully towards your family members, then behaving with respect towards people in public (perhaps people you do not know) will come much more naturally for you. How do people show respect for each other in public?

- ☺ *Holding the door open for the person walking behind you.*
- ☺ *Picking up someone's change for them if they drop it on the ground.*
- ☺ *Getting out of someone's way if that person is in a hurry.*
- ☺ *Apologizing if you accidentally*



*knock another student's books off his desk.*

- ☞ *Waiting patiently if a clerk is having a hard time at the store.*
- ☞ *Using decent language in the hallways at school or in other public places.*
- ☞ *Not rushing to be the first in line.*

## Body Language

We could write an entire book about how to act if you are trying to be respectful, but the particulars of respect will come most easily when they rest on a good foundation. No matter what the situation is, respect can most easily be shown through your *silent language*, or your *body language*. It is not as much *what* you say or do, but rather *how* you speak and act.

- ☞ *How do you speak to others? What kind of tone do you use?*
- ☞ *Do you roll your eyes when someone makes a mistake?*
- ☞ *Do you greet someone when they come home? Do you greet someone you know when you walk through the halls?*
- ☞ *Do you whisper in crowds?*
- ☞ *If you are standing in a group and someone else approaches the group do you say 'hi' to that person or smile at them?*
- ☞ *When you get a bad grade at school, do you slouch in your chair and pout?*
- ☞ *Do you laugh when someone makes a mistake?*
- ☞ *Do you look at someone when you are having a conversation?*
- ☞ *Do you look at your watch and act annoyed when someone is telling you something you don't want to hear?*

Again, as we said above, we could give you a thousand examples. You could use the lists as good reading material to put you to sleep at night! The thing to remember is this: The key to respect, at home or in public, is the *how*. How do you show others respect through your silent language?

## Disrespect—Ouch!

Have you ever had anyone treat you disrespectfully, perhaps because you are young or you did something they did not like? What does it feel like when someone treats you like that? How

does that person act to show you that he does not respect you? Try to describe it.

- ☹ *Talking during class or when someone else is talking.*
- ☹ *Making faces behind someone's back.*
- ☹ *Talking badly about someone.*
- ☹ *Pushing someone and not saying "sorry."*
- ☹ *Knocking someone's books over and not apologizing.*
- ☹ *Not greeting someone you know in the hall or in the street.*
- ☹ *Not paying attention to someone who comes to your house to visit.*
- ☹ *Reading, watching TV or looking away when someone is talking to you.*
- ☹ *Hanging the phone up on someone in the middle of a discussion or an argument.*

Why does it hurt when someone treats you disrespectfully? It hurts because they are telling you through their actions that you are not important and that they do not really care about you. They are saying: *I don't care how you feel, what you think or what you need.* It hurts when people don't care!

## Beginning With Self-Respect

Usually, when we think of respect, we think about how we treat others. But respect begins with ourselves. A person shows that he respects himself by taking care of himself. At the same time, he also shows others that he respects them. Respect itself is an attitude that stays inside our hearts; we can only see respect through actions. What actions show that we respect ourselves, others and the environment?

## Yourself

Self-respect has two forms: respecting one's body and one's personality. Caring for one's appearance—clothes, hair, fingernails and ears—is an important expression of self-respect. But it's even more important to respect the goodness which lies within you. In this case, respect is expressed through healthy actions that help you to grow, to become a better, more honest, well-rounded person. So, let us see how these two forms of self-respect interact.

## Respecting Others

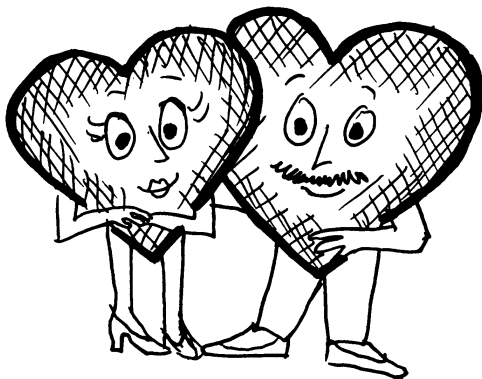
We have just included a short list here about how you show respect for others. If you are in doubt about any point, check back in the chapters under sections *Showing Respect at Home*, *Showing Respect in Public*, *Body Language and Disrespect—Ouch!*

- ☞ *You look at someone when they speak to you.*
- ☞ *You listen to what someone has to say before telling your side of the story.*
- ☞ *You greet someone when you see them.*
- ☞ *You tell someone what you think.*
- ☞ *You show a person that you respect them by the way you do these things.*

## Being a Person of Respect: The Quickest Way to a Parent's Heart

When do your parents feel the proudest of you? Some parents feel proud when their children do well in school, or in sports, or perhaps in some other area. No matter what makes your parents feel the most proud of you, there is no doubt that they will be proud of you if you behave respectfully. When you are respectful, everyone can see it: your parents, your teachers, your brothers and sisters, your grandparents, the neighbors and other significant people in your life.

People assume that you are sincere when you show respect to other people. Your parents don't have to make excuses for you. *Don't worry about Billy screaming at me and calling me names*, your mother tells your grandmother, *he only acts like that when he has a stomachache, poor little thing!* They know that they can take you places with them and you will be welcomed. One of the best gifts you can give yourself, and your parents, is free: respect.



## A Matter of Respect: When You Least Expect It

*One summer, when I was in college, I worked as a camp counselor for severely mentally retarded children. None of the kids I worked with could talk. Most of them wore diapers even though they were between the ages of 7 and 10. None of them could eat lunch without a counselor feeding them. For the most part the children seemed to not be able to understand anything we said or did.*

*One little girl, Sarah, wore a bandana around her neck because she drooled. Every day I fed her, changed her clothes and took her to the bathroom. I spent a lot of time with Sarah and the other children. At times I was tempted to make some little joke about them with my partner, just to relieve pressure—the job was extremely hard, some of our campers were violent or out of control—but we never did make jokes.*

*The following summer I visited the camp. I saw Sarah in a classroom with a friend of mine. When I greeted them my friend said, “Look what Sarah can do now!”*

*Sarah had a little computer board in her lap. She still wore her bandana, and looked exactly the same. My friend asked Sarah, “What is her name?” Sarah then typed my whole name out—first and last names—perfectly. She even spelled my last name correctly. I don’t know if Sarah ever saw my name written down before; I certainly never wrote it on the blackboard. It turned out that Sarah could communicate perfectly through her computer. I realized that no matter what the circumstances are, respect is always important.*

## Why Respect People You Are Not Close To?

What about respecting people we do not know, or even people we do not like very much? That is much harder than respecting the people we love and adore. Why is it important to show respect to all people, no matter if we like them or not?

- ☞ *Because all people are valuable.*
- ☞ *Because often the way we treat others is the way we will be treated by others.*

Respecting strangers is not the same as being a friend to everyone you see on the street. We are not suggesting that you try to be friendly with all people. What we are suggesting is that you should show basic respect to all people. If someone is acting oddly, or a person’s behavior is making you uncomfortable, don’t hesitate to get yourself out of that person’s company. You do not



have to sacrifice common sense to be a person whose life is built upon respect.

## Journal

Think of a popular song that has the theme of respect in it—there are dozens. Why do you think that respect is so important?



## To Do

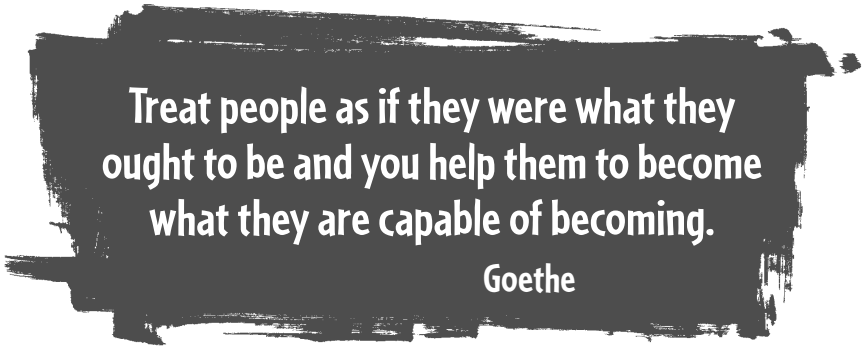
1. Look through the newspaper and find a news article which, in some way or other, shows that someone or something is being treated with respect or disrespect. Cut the article out and write about what you have found.
2. Make your own list of things you do that show respect to other people.
3. Look around in the world you live in. In what ways do you see people showing respect? In what ways do you see people showing disrespect?
4. Have a Day of Respect in your class. During the day make a list of the names of other people in your class whom you saw being respectful to themselves, to others or to the environment. Try to find as many people acting respectfully in all three categories as possible.
  - *At the end of the day, or as soon as time permits, get together as a class and talk about your day.*
  - *How many items did you have on your list? What did you see other people doing?*
  - *What was it like when everyone in the class treated each other and the environment with respect?*
  - *Do you think that your class or your school would be improved if all the people in the school behaved respectfully to one another all the time? If so, how?*



## Key Ideas

- ☞ Respect in relationships includes self-respect and respect towards other people.
- ☞ A person who cannot respect himself, cannot truly respect other people.





**Treat people as if they were what they  
ought to be and you help them to become  
what they are capable of becoming.**

**Goethe**