

Are Communication and Etiquette Old Fashioned?



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Communication between people is a dying, or maybe just severely injured, art form. Our world is filled with technological devices that allow us to “chat” with one another without ever hearing the sound of a live voice, circumventing the longest standing style of communication—talking and listening. None of us are immune to this, but there are ways to combat poor communication if we are willing to make the effort.

Educators are often asked to teach both curriculum and character education. Many teachers have no problem doing this as they are well versed in their subject matter, grew up in a time when you had to talk to communicate, had quality role models, and are willing to take on the responsibility of assisting their students in becoming well-rounded, educated members of society. But despite their skills in the classroom, communicating with other adults can sometimes cause educators to have anxiety.

Why is it so difficult to visit with another person face to face? It is amazing how many people are unable or unwilling to communicate directly with one another. A lot of energy is devoted to rumor and hearsay—almost always leading to some form of miscommunication that promulgates hurt feelings, a sense of being left out, and mistrust.

When actual verbal communication does take place, respect and courtesy are often absent. Is respect old fashioned? Are we too short on time and patience to remember to be courteous? Has our use of electronic devices made that determination for us?

We all know better. Our parents taught us well and our teachers demanded respect. So what has happened? Where did we go wrong as individuals or as a society? Do we have the time, the need, or the willingness to improve our communication strategies?

Family and school are still two of the best resources for modeling and practicing effective, respectful communication. Kids can learn from adults, with parents/guardians taking the lead and educators following suit. Add to the mix coaches, mentors, religious leaders, youth volunteers, and employers, and there are a lot of potential role models for students.

Schools can do their part to help students develop communication skills by both providing character education and setting parameters for electronic device usage during the school day. Personal interactions between school community members, students and staff, and staff and families, should occur throughout the day. A strong and consistent dialogue between parents and educators benefits students by keeping everyone in the loop and helping both sides avoid surprises. Respect should be encouraged and expected.

So, parents and educators, it is up to you. It is important to initiate conversations that require talking and listening, to model examples of appropriate interactions, and to utilize electronic devices to convey your message in a respectful and meaningful way. Do what it takes to engage in respectful communications. You will be glad you did. ☺



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