



The World Is Waiting For You...



Parenting With Purpose

Request #1: Respect

“Be kind, don’t judge, and have respect for others. If we can all do this, the world would be a better place. The point is to teach this to the next generation.”

Jasmine Guinness

If you RESPECT me,
I will hear you.

What is RESPECT?

How does “respect” play out in the family structure? There are three camps that define the way we raise our children: in the first, respect must flow from the child to the parent. In the second camp, it flows from the parent to the child. And in the third, respect is mutually given and received.... Ahhhh, that sounds like a home I want to live in!

Sometimes, to the dismay of all who live there, not everyone in the family agrees with each other on the rules of respect. Quite the challenge, I’d say!

I remember being involved in a heated discussion with a neighbor about the one sided way that respect is given, even demanded, in his household. In a loud and angry voice, he explained that it was not his job to respect his kid. At least not while he was providing food, clothing and shelter for his son. It was the **kid** who had the duty of respecting the **dad**, at all times and in all circumstances.

UGH!

Now don't get me wrong, I get it. It is right that a child is raised to respect the parent. But it is most definitely NOT just a one-way street, as the father demanded. Far from it (and now we know which camp you reside in, because you are either scathing right now or you are agreeing with me). But please allow me to explain.

Here is the definition of respect:

“To treat with special consideration or high regard.”

Notice that the word “deserve” is left out of the definition. Respect is something that all people, ALL PEOPLE, need and want just because they are members of the human race. We must treat our teenagers, and yes, our younger children, with consideration simply because they are human. And as humans, they are doing their job of maturing into young adults.

Actually, respect is the number one behavior to learn as a parent because it is the foundation for all relationships. It is the first request that teenagers asked of their parents in the poem, “A Message To Parents.” And honestly, without mutual respect in the home, you might as well forget about ever having a solid relationship with your kids, especially your teenagers.

“We should all consider each other as human beings,
and we should respect each other.”

Malala Yousafzai

Think about the homeless people on the streets, begging for money. Are they worthy of your respect or should you just step over them while you hurry to the other side of the road? Yes, they are worthy. And why, you might ask? Because they are human. Period. We have absolutely no idea why these poor souls are in the situation that they are in. We don't know the circumstances of their lives, just like, believe it or not, you don't always know the circumstances of your teen's life.

We are not with our kids 24 hours a day. We don't know every single detail of what happened to them in school or on the bus or with their friends.

“Respect is how to treat everyone.”

Richard Branson

Respect vs. Pride

Here's a question for you. Have you ever told your teen, or child, that you are proud of them? Of course you have. We all have. It's what parents do. But let's make a distinction here between pride and respect. We already know the definition of respect. Let's look at a definition of pride:

“Pleased or satisfied with your possession.”

Hmmmmm. So pride, or being proud, is all about you and ownership. It's all about how the other person makes YOU look and feel. Respect, on the other hand, is all about THEM. Here are some examples to help you distinguish between the two.

EXAMPLE #1

- * I am so **proud** of your grades.
- * I really **respect** how hard you worked to get those grades.

EXAMPLE #2

- * I'm so **proud** of you for being here! It's awesome that you want to do something about this.
- * I have such a deep **respect** for your commitment to overcoming your addiction.

See the difference? Pride focuses on how you feel about something they have done. It points to them “earning” your pride. It’s an accomplishment, action or a behavior. Respect is something that they *are*. It’s a quality that your teen or child has. It’s compassion, sensitivity, forgiving, hard-working or caring.

“When I approach a child, he inspires in me two sentiments: tenderness for what he is, and respect for what he may become.”

Louis Pasteur

We, as parents, often focus on accomplishments. But what our children **DO** is not who they **ARE**. They need our respect because of their human qualities. And it's never too early to start focusing on these qualities. Kids as young as 3 years old are able to understand the difference in how you talk to them.

We say we're so proud of their band performance or their skills as a baseball player or their art project. And yeah, I get that. They make us look good when they do something well. But think about how much they practiced to be so accomplished at their musical instrument! Think about the dedication your son shows by going outside, day after day, to hit a hundred baseballs off the tee or the amazing concentration your daughter shows by painting the finest detail of her art project. It's not about **what** they do. It's about **how** they do it. It's about character!

"Knowledge will give you power,
But character respect."

Bruce Lee

EXAMPLE #3

Let's say your son is an excellent athlete, and his athletic abilities totally defined who he was as a high school student. He was always known as the sports guy and his whole world, and yours, revolved around his next game. Then he goes off to college, but the competition is fierce so he doesn't make the team. No big deal, right? He'll just be a regular college student.

Except at the end of the first year he flunks out of college and comes home depressed and different. So what happened?

He was always acknowledged for what he DID. Baseball, football, basketball, etc. Maybe his proud parents and high school friends didn't acknowledge him for who he WAS. And then, when he wasn't playing sports any longer, he felt as though he wasn't valued for anything! Even if he did continue to play in college, chances are he would eventually move on to get a job and leave his status as an athlete behind. Then what?

Maybe if he had been truly respected for his hard work, determination, and perseverance instead of his athletic abilities, he would handle this differently.

“When I look at a person, I see a person -
Not a rank, not a class, not a title.”

Criss Jami

Choosing Respect Over Pride

Start thinking in terms of respect, not pride and you will totally shift your relationships. Pride breeds co-dependence. And your teen or child will have to keep doing the action to make you happy. That doesn't sound like a relationship-building situation for either one of you. But if you challenge yourself to acknowledge the quality that supports the behavior, you will be able to show him or her that it's not the behavior you love, it's the person! If the high school athlete was acknowledged in this way, he would have had the foundation to face any challenge in college, AND life!

So respect is a positive, unconditional expression of esteem. It is NOT attached to your child's performance or behavior and it should be shown to children, and all people, just because they are individuals. Let's go back to my neighbor at the beginning of our discussion. Are you still on his side?

There's an even more important reason to get your feelings toward respect figured out as soon as possible. Think about what we are doing here. We are trying to give your teens, children and young adults something bigger than themselves to believe in; a cause to work toward, a wrong that needs to be righted. Do you think this is going to be successful if your teen is not respected at home? Do you think they're going to think twice about respecting the environment or a kid in school or the teacher that gives them a bad grade?

"Respect is one of the most important things

You can teach a child."

Catherine Pulsifer

Here's an eye opener for you. When Diana Sterling was doing the research for the poem, "A Message To Parents," she asked the teens about the importance of being respected by their parents. One teen answered in a way that Diana will never forget. She said, "If I'm not respected by my parents, then how am I supposed to respect myself?" Let's think about that for a second. A teenage girl with no self-respect is a recipe for disaster. With all the factors influencing the behavior of teenagers in today's world, not being respected at home shouldn't even be in the mix.

I want you to think of this discussion as an introduction to a new model of communication for you and your family. Regardless of whether your children are still young, or fully engulfed in the teen years, use this as the foundation to think and talk to your kids differently. And don't stop there! Treat your spouse and other family members, co-workers and friends with your new language abilities too! There is no age limit for treating people with respect, and more importantly, telling the people you love how much you respect them.

And it **IS** a two-way street. I firmly believe that. Sorry, neighbor!

"Respect comes in two unchangeable steps:

Giving it and receiving it."

Edmond Mbiaka

Practicing Respect

The following “practices” are suggestions for incorporating the art of respecting others into your life. Quick question. Has anyone ever said to you, “I respect you”? How did it feel? Sadly, it’s not a word that is commonly used in daily conversation. Most people never even hear the word, nor do they say it to others. Acknowledging your respect for someone is an affirmation of their being. Teenagers are ravenous for this type of confirmation. It lets them know that they are not alone and that they’re on the right track. And when young children are raised knowing that they are valued, everybody wins.

It’s not too late, even if your kids are grown and out of the house. Begin practicing respect today! Get some sticky notes and post reminders to yourself on your refrigerator, on the bathroom mirror, in your car for when you pick up your kids.....wherever you could use a gentle reminder.

Remember, the term “practice” is open-ended. Practicing something guarantees improvement, not perfection, so keep at it. The more you use the word, the less foreign it will sound! Here we go!

“Respect is one of the greatest expressions of Love.”

Miguel Angel Ruiz

PRACTICE #1 - SAY IT

Try using the word “respect” daily in appropriate situations with your teenager (or tween or spouse or parent or friend). Say it in a respectful tone, paying particular attention to your body language. You’ll probably have to look for opportunities to genuinely say “I respect you for...” Try to say it whenever appropriate over the next several weeks. Watch their reaction. Make sure what you say is from the heart – it might take some practice to make it sound natural, not forced, but keep trying! It’s very difficult to use the word respect in our American culture but you can change that. Well, at least in your own home! Spend a few moments at night remembering what you said and the result.

And if you feel funny saying the word respect over and over, mix it up with something like “I recognize,” or “I notice” or something with a similar meaning. Just don’t say the word ‘proud’ all the time!

*“By showing your children that you acknowledge their ideas, views,
and decisions, you are being a good example of respect.”*

Bethany Bridges

PRACTICE #2 - REHEARSAL

Do you respect yourself? Every morning, look in the mirror and say “I respect you” to yourself. Mean it. Get used to it, how it sounds, how you feel when you say it. It will be easier to say and show to others if you can first learn to say it to yourself.

“Respect yourself and others will respect you.”

Confucius

PRACTICE #3 - QUALITIES

Write a list of all the adults whom you respect, and why. What particular qualities, not accomplishments, do you respect them for?

Now add teenagers to your list, especially your own teenagers. Write down the good qualities of each teenager on the list. Put the list in your purse or pocket and look at it daily. Start using words that describe the qualities, not the actions, that you respect in your teen.

Now make a list of your young children and write down the good qualities of your little ones. Chances are the qualities will remain and even grow stronger if you recognize them now and nurture them as your child grows. Way to be proactive!

PRACTICE #4 - SHOW RESPECT

Pay attention to your actions and **show** respect to your children. Then practice showing respect to other kids, especially those who you would normally bypass or ignore. What is your own personal definition of respect and what is the best way for you to show your teen that you respect them? They may not know that you respect them until you actually say it out loud. Telling other adults that you respect your teen does not create the same connection as when you tell them yourself. If you're struggling, or are embarrassed, refer to practice #1.

PRACTICE #5 - ASK

Ask your teen or tween, "How do you like to be respected?" Maybe they want you to say it, or maybe they want you to show it by handing over the car keys. Whatever they say, don't criticize, just listen! And by doing that, BAM! You've shown respect!

*"Follow the 3 R's - Respect for self -
Respect for others -
Responsibility for all your actions."
Dalai Lama*

