



Teaching Children RESPECT

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Everyone needs respect. In a world where the current mantra seems to be a loss of respect in many different areas loss of self-respect, respect for property, and respect for others. If this is the situation from an adult perspective, then how do we teach children to have an attitude of respect?

Most of the schools have been implementing what they call “character education.” While this is a good approach to teaching children different good character traits, I believe the teaching of these begins at home and continues long after the curriculum has been taught. The character education curriculum is comprised of teaching children many different aspects of character—trustworthiness, responsibility, fairness, and respect just to name a few. In the teaching respect, we can list six components:

Treat other people the way you want to be treated.

- Be courteous and polite.
- Listen to what other people have to say.
- Don’t insult people, or make fun of them, or call them names.
- Don’t bully or pick on others.
- Don’t judge people before you get to know them.

These seem to be very basic tenets of being an all around good person. But how do you teach a child respect? There are several ways.

1. Modeling. This is the simplest way children learn. If a child hears your opinion about not liking other races, for example, the child will begin to emulate that, as well. On the flipside, if a parent exhibits a kindness towards people who are different, the child will begin to see the world as an opportunity to learn from different types of people.

2. Start at the very beginning of your child’s life. When children are old enough to play and share, it is important to teach children how to take care of their toys. This is one aspect of teaching respect for property. Teaching children how to share is also a component of respect.

3. Teach your children how to talk with people (not to people). Asking how someone’s day is going, complimenting a person on what they are wearing, etc., being concerned about something that person may be experiencing are ways of teaching your child to respect other people.

4. Expose your child to different things. Take your child to a cultural festival so they can see and

experience cultural differences. Unusual foods, interesting customs, different types of music and dances can be a way a child develops interest in and acceptance of people of different races/cultures. Cultural differences abound in this country. Rather than look down on people who are different, look at cultural differences as an opportunity to learn and experience something different than your own.

5. Demonstrate respect. Do something kind. Make it a goal for you and your child (or children) to do something kind for someone at least once a month. Give your children choices and help them decide what they want to do. It may be taking used clothing to a shelter, selling lemonade on the corner and giving those proceeds to an organization that helps children, or going to your local shelter to serve a meal to the homeless.

6. Teach your child to say no. Say no to drugs, premarital sex, inappropriate touches, unwanted behavior, cigarettes, etc.-anything that would have a bearing on their development physically, socially, and psychologically. One of the more difficult challenges is to teach a child respect for themselves, but in order for a child to exhibit respect to others, they have to learn how to respect themselves. This means teaching your child that some things are just unacceptable. The bottom line is that everybody is worthy of being treated with respect—even the individual!

R-Respect yourself

E-Everybody deserves respect and kindness.

S-Socio-economic status has no bearing on whether someone should be respected.

P-Property. Respect other people’s property by not abusing or damaging it.

E-Environment. Respect the environment by not littering, conserving, and recycling.

C-Cultural differences should be embraced, not criticized.

T-Things. Respect the tangible and intangible things that are yours as well as others. Respect the wants and wishes of others. Respect other people’s opinions.

R-E-S-P-E-C-T—not a hard word to spell, actually and not a hard word to implement either.