

# Manners

This is not rocket science. Just please, thank you, yes sir, yes ma'am, no sir, no ma'am, excuse me. Be polite. And as Robert Fulghum says in *All I Really Need to Know I Learned in Kindergarten*: "share everything, play fair, don't hit people, put things back where you found them, clean up your own mess, don't take things that aren't yours, say you're sorry when you hurt somebody, wash your hands before you eat and flush."

We speak of a person having good manners, bad manners or no manners. Having good manners is desirable. Having bad manners or no manners is not desirable. It really is just that simple. Since there is good evidence to support the notion that manners are more a matter of nurture than nature, every new generation needs to learn manners all over again. No child has ever been born having good manners. As a matter of fact, the self-centeredness that comes with all children is often demonstrated in a way that flies in the face of good manners.

Just teaching manners will not suffice for many children. Training as well as teaching will be needed for most children. Training carries with it the notion of repetition, and is repetition ever needed when it comes to learning to practice good manners!

When should this training begin? In her book, *365 Manners Kids Should Know*, Sheryl Eberly says on page 5 "Parents begin teaching manners by example as soon as a child is born". She goes on to say, "Whether we like it or not, learning usually takes place in the home, through imitation".

In school, children who do not show good manners limit their own learning as well as interfere with the learning of others and prevent the teachers from doing the best possible job of teaching.

The first step then in training a child to have good manners is to demonstrate good manners yourself. There are a few children who decide that they are going to develop their social skills and have good manners in spite of what they've seen at home.

Working to develop and maintain good manners is a lifelong project. However, the more good manners are practiced, the easier it becomes to maintain good manners even in the most trying of circumstances.

Having good manners is an essential component of good social and adaptive coping skills. Good manners will elicit respect and appreciation from others. Thoughtfulness, character and caring are all communicated through good manners.

There are a few things in life that seem to have "built in power". Having good manners is one of them and will make a person of any age "easier to live with".

Lowell E. Becker, M.D.

Copyright 2015, Lowell E. Becker, M.D., All Rights Reserved. These materials are protected by U.S. copyright law and may not be copied, reproduced, distributed, transmitted, displayed, published, modified, edited or otherwise exploited without the prior written permission of Dr. Becker. You may not alter or remove any copyright or other notice from copies of these materials.