

Nice Guys Finish First
By Jill Evans Kryston, Etiquette Consultant

Q: Both my mother and grandmother had been influential in my upbringing by insisting on good manners. However, now that I'm raising my own children, I've been reluctant to enforce the manners I learned for fear they will weaken them in our competitive culture. I wonder if the old adage is true that nice guys finish last.

A: I believe there are a lot of parents who share your fears, but I couldn't disagree more. Many a savvy business professional has also been called a lady and a gentleman. We don't all have to be as ruthless as Donald Trump in order to be successful in the world!

I'm afraid misconceptions exist about the word etiquette. Often it is associated with strict and stuffy rules, and as you mentioned, weakness. But etiquette is simply about building relationships which translates into character strength. Etiquette is the power that fuels our relationships, by helping us to know how to act, and how to expect others to act in any type of situation. It's not about the rules as much as it's about the relationships.

Manners happen to be an integral part of today's global economy. Now that we have moved from roles to relationships in our competitive world, behavior and intelligence will determine where and how far you'll go in life. Soft skills are often more important than technical experience. Many hirings, firings, and promotions are based on manners.

One of the most overlooked facets of success is that it is built on relationships and research shows people cannot be truly successful in relationships without civility. When you treat others well, it doesn't mean you become a doormat. Quite the opposite is true; interpersonal skills are empowering and they build morale. You not only exemplify confidence and wield authority, but you command respect, communicate more effectively, and make friends more easily.

It's been said that civility costs nothing and buys everything. P.M. Forni, author of "Choosing Civility," and cofounder of the Johns Hopkins Civility Project, puts it this way: "Being civil means being constantly aware of others and weaving restraint, respect, and consideration into the very fabric of awareness." Who wouldn't want to work for a successful person with those principles?

Email your etiquette questions to Jill at: information@DefiningManners.com or mail to: P.O. Box 1703, Shavertown, PA 18708.

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