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[Home](#) | [Gloria's Kinky Links](#) | [Gloria's Counseling FAQ](#) | [The Well-Read Head](#) | [W.D. Brame](#)

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[[Up](#)] [[All About Catherine Gross](#)] [[fetishauctioneer.com](#)] [[to be a good top](#)] [[Old Guard](#)]
[[Public vs. Private: Etiquette, Protocol and Manners](#)] [[D/s Families](#)] [[Vaughan Keith National Educator Award](#)]
[[Sub Hubby Came Out to me](#)] [[The Challenge](#)] [[Using Conditioning: Ethical or not?](#)] [[Helpless Bottoms?](#)]
[[Dominance](#)] [[Emotional Edge Play](#)] [[Hierarchal Structures](#)] [[Body Image](#)] [[Discipline and Goals](#)]

Public vs. Private: Etiquette, Protocol and Manners

1 [notnilla](#)

2002-11-03 02:56

Below is a handout I use for one of the classes I give. It's copyrighted so please do not duplicate. What do you make of it?

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This session will address the differences and similarities of etiquette, protocol and manners as they relate to society and BDSM. We will explore historical and current differing perspectives. Protocols in M/s relations, D/s relations and play. We will address party etiquette vs. social etiquette.

Etiquette: 1. The body of prescribed social usages. 2. Any special code of behavior or courtesy.

Protocol: n. 1. The forms of ceremony and etiquette observed by diplomats and heads of state. 2. The first copy of a treaty or other document prior to its ratification. 3. Any preliminary draft or record of a transaction.

Manners: 1. A way of acting; a person's bearing or behavior. 2. The socially correct way of acting; polite bearing or behavior; 3. The prevailing systems or modes of social conduct of a specific society, period, or group.

These definitions are from Webster's. They do not help a tremendous amount as each relates to our various SM communities. Below are the differences I see in these definitions. Please remember, this is merely an opinion and not the end all be all definition.

Manners are the behaviors Emily Post would dictate. In my opinion, they will stand you in good stead no matter where you go SM or not.

Etiquette dictates sets of behavior we use in social settings that become particular by context and group

identification. For example, all people who are participating in a gathering for one evening will observe play party etiquette for that evening but not necessarily at home. Dining etiquette can be general or highly specified based on the way the table is set. In SM, we have specialized these areas, written them down and agree to adhere to them for at least one evening at a time.

Protocols are sets of behavior that are hierarchal or power based or relationship based in our communities. We each decide what these will be. There is no community wide agreement on what they should be. The closest we

each decide what these will be. There is no community wide agreement on what they should be. The closest we come to agreed community behaviors are sets of etiquette. Protocol is personal or a group decision. An example of personal protocol is a set of expectations and agreed behaviors between an owner and their property. An Owner may stipulate that each morning they are to be woken by their property kneeling and whispering, "Master/Mistress, it's time to wake." Then their submissive is instructed to hand their own coffee when the owner sits up and inquire if their owner wishes them to assume (this means the servant would stretch across the end of the bed so the owner can indulge in caning them to begin the day) as they drink their coffee. This could be a morning protocol. A group protocol could be a dress code or other agreed behaviors of a particular group.

With these definitions in mind, there has been an attempt to take some party etiquette and make it into a more generalized standard of behavior. The best advice I could give you is to take certain general party behaviors and translate them into your world. It will prepare you well for all types of interactions in general.

General Party Etiquette:

- Do not touch anyone else's toy bag or toys that are hanging for a scene. It's good form to ask for permission to touch toys first regardless of whether you are a top or a bottom.
- Do not touch a bottom or submissive who is in a collar without permission from their top. Some people feel it's fine if the collar does not have a lock on it, however, I would suggest asking to clear any doubt. Many bottoms may be contracted and not wear a collar, ask first.
- Do not assume by someone's looks how they wish to be addressed. Ask them.
- If you see a scene makes you uneasy, you may simply walk away. Interrupting a scene is not good form. You always have the option of asking the DM if what is going on is ok.
- Always remember that a top needs "whip space". This is the surrounding space that it will take to throw a whip or flogger. Walking behind a top and into a top's whip space can interrupt the scene or you could get hit.
- Do not speak or laugh loudly near an on-going scene. It can interrupt the players, disturb their concentration and may feel intrusive.
- It is generally good form to give each scene at least six feet of space. On occasion, this is not always possible due to space limitations. Do your best.
- Most people are approachable. If a top does something in a scene that interests you and you'd like to find out more about that activity, most tops, or bottoms for that matter, would be open to talking to you afterwards. A compliment goes a long way to starting a conversation.
- Please and thank you also go a long way!
- After a scene has ended, give the players some time to wind down before approaching them. Remember, scenes do not end simply because the cuffs came off and the single tail was packed. Aftercare is needed in many cases and should be respected.
- Always ask your host/hostess if they need any help with clean up or set up, this is very good form and not practiced nearly enough by many of us! If you're new and don't know too many people, a wonderful way to get to know more people is to ask your hosts if there is anything you can do to help.

These generalities will go a long way to aiding you in being polite in public, private and even with friends. Remember, a simple apology will also generally be enough to extricate you from any transgression. We lose nothing in an apology—we only gain our integrity and the trust of those around us.

By Catherine Gross

2 [knyghtflyher](#)

2002-11-04 02:42

Lady Catherine,

Superb advice. I truly wish more people would take this to heart.

Superb advice...I truly wish more people would take this to heart.

Knyghtflyher

3 [Hawkins's kate](#)

2002-11-04 03:57

Lady Catherine,

smiling

Please Ma'm, i am from the other side of the pond, and sometimes cultural references pass me by on account of them not being known here (here is Netherlands). i suppose Emily Post is a woman who writes and talks about etiquette and manners?

The rest of the post is rather different than the title made me expect. i expected a whole load of rules and protocols and the like, and instead found an article that made perfect sense to inexperienced me at the first read.

You said good manners will stand you in good stead anywhere, i suppose i was brought up to honour that...all the other things you write in this post, seem to me to be simply extrapolations of common manners.

The idea of not behaving as you outline out in public fills me with a very uneasy nervous truckload of hysterical giggles...

look in mind of kate: she, small woman walking behind Hawkins in venue, wanting to go past scene in progress, rudely pushing whip-whielding Dom aside, shouting 'coming through!', coming through!

The only way i can survive my own nervousness and shyness in public somewhere new is by relying on manners i was taught by Mum and Dad, and the ones Hawkins (whom i may proudly call my Master) gives me on top of those.

It made me feel a tiny bit more confident to find out my own instinctive reaction (to just be on best behaviour)is apparently the right one.

Thank you for pointing out it is alright to ask questions. i'm not sure i'd dare...but i'll remember: *grin* 'Lady Catherine said it is allowed...'

kate

4 [rabidchihauhau](#)

2002-11-04 08:20

The fact that Lady Catherine is able to deliver a discussion of these topics is a sad commentary on the fact that "common sense" isn't common.

But then again, we seem to live in a world these days where normal folks don't even know how to say 'hello' or 'goodbye' when talking on the phone, let alone 'please', 'thank you', 'excuse me' or 'you're welcome' when in public settings.

One thing I would like to add is that it IS polite to ask what the local etiquette is - providing you do so in an appropriate manner.

kate - that means no walking into the middle of the room an shouting 'yo! will someone please tell me how the fuck to act?' :)

5 [Hawkins's kate](#)

2002-11-04 11:24

Rabid,

Thank you so much for pointing that out Sir.

(that was ok wasn't it? *grin*)

k

6 [rabidchihauhau](#)

2002-11-04 15:00

kate,

yes, but if you are observing proper etiquette when dealing with me, the honorific can be dropped at all times.

Appreciated, appropriate when not knowing how to proceed otherwise, but unnecessary from here on out.
(Besides, I'm 'nilla right now, neither dom nor sub.)

Here's another rule all: in most situations, 'high' etiquette is the correct way to proceed until learning otherwise.
Anyone who takes offense at a proper form of address is a bore (and I don't mean a south african colonialist...)

7 [firebaby](#)

2002-11-04 18:58

" is a bore (and I don't mean a south african colonialist...)"

ummm, isn't that a Boer?

Peace
firebaby

8 [rabidchihauhau](#)

2002-11-04 19:31

firebaby,

some here, including myself, are speeling challenged.

Besides, I thought it was funny...

9 [notnilla](#)

2002-11-05 00:05

I'll respond to several posts in this one.

kate, you are absolutely correct. Emily Post is an american (no longer living) who published many books on etiquette and manners.

Never stop asking questions, kate. It may lead to the most joyous, surprising moments of your life.

I also have to agree with Rabid. I don't think manners are common any longer. I believe this is a dying art. After all, how many restaurants have any of you been in lately where you saw the gentlemen (or butches) rise when a lady left the table or returned?

Catherine :::a lady who insists on being treated and respected by the use of good manners ::::

10 [Trinity](#)

2002-11-05 08:40

<< I believe this is a dying art. After all, how many restaurants have any of you been in lately where you saw the gentlemen (or butches) rise when a lady left the table or returned? >>

Lady Catherine,

Not meaning to be picky here, but that to me doesn't seem so much like good manners as like an antiquated gesture couched in assumed "gender differences" between males and females. I would, in fact, find it rude if someone treated me in specific ways merely because of my gender. I have no wish to be accorded respect as "a lady" -- as a person, certainly, but not based on my assumed membership in or agreement with norms that only put people on a gendered pedestal that has nothing to do with their general humanness or who they are as people.

I'd rather not see the return of "chivalry" if "chivalry" is to be grounded in gender norms that have everything to do with the romanticization of "ladies" and nothing to do with people as we really are.

The idealization of "ladies", after all, did very little to help actual women attain power over their destinies in eras wherein women were considered to be little more than exotic visions of beauty or grace -- incapable of higher rationality and incapable of real power over anything but the domestic sphere. "Ladies" were treasures who needed to be protected -- not simply treated well, but shielded from important parts of a well-rounded life.

This hardly seems to me like a story I'd want to use in constucting my conception of myself as a dominant. I

recognize that I speak only for myself here, and that others can probably easily ignore the suspect history of such roles and ideas. I cannot, so I cannot support their universal reinstitution.

I could see making it a protocol with a submissive that he or she do such, but I would hope it would be based on the power relations, and not on suspect gender norms.

(Lest I give the wrong idea here -- basic politeness, and gestures of respect that are not grounded in master narratives that make me out to be something I am not, however, are very much another story.)

-T, donning Feminist Social Critic hat

11 [rabidchihauhau](#)

2002-11-05 11:28

Good for you Trinity. You can stand when I leave the table...(lol).

I think Lady Catherine was providing an example of 'high etiquette' which is observed in the most formal occasions and which always (ALWAYS) lags behind the current social norms in its application of formality. Going back to an earlier era's protocol seems to be a standard method for invoking formality. For a non-social example of the same, just take a look at military uniforms. Compare the working uniform (standard battle dress issue) to dress uniforms. Those 'dress blues' the marines wear aren't too far off from an earlier era's battle dress. Or take a look at a cadet's uniform at West Point.

I think it has something to do with the general idea that 'antiques' are more formal and 'better' than the casual of the current day.

Standing when a Lady arrives or leaves - when at a 'formal' function has nothing to do with gender bias and everything to do with "being a roman in rome". It IS impolite to not observe the etiquette in someone else's house.

A non-gender based example would be standing to shake the hand of a new arrival at the event, rather than just nodding a hello as you stuff your face with rubber chicken. Another would be advancing to greet someone - unless you're standing in a receiving line of course.

Etiquette, in my estimation, originally evolved out of power dynamics. The King was seated higher than everyone else. You could judge your position in society by where you were seated at table. You stood in place to be greeted if you were 'bigger' than the person coming to greet. The degree of your bow spoke volumes about who and where you were. and etc.

I think that true social grace comes from being able to quickly observe the local etiquette and properly observing it - or appropriately absenting yourself if unable to do so. And in ignoring bad behavior properly, should that be necessary also.

In your own particular case, Trinity, I think you would be acting appropriately if you accepted the honor (rising from table) and then went on to make polite dinner conversation about how ridiculous you think the whole thing is - presuming of course that in attending whatever event it was you were forewarned about the social mores in place and had decided to attend anyway.

To put this on a non-gender plane, and offering a more 'modern' example of common rudeness: how many times have you been at a restaurant waiting to be seated, only to have someone brush past you to the head of the line without even asking if you were waiting?

Happened to me just the other day. The restaurant now has a much more prominent sign saying 'Steve Says - Please wait to be seated'

12 [notnilla](#)

2002-11-05 16:06

Dear T,

I can absolutely appreciate your point of view.

<<The idealization of "ladies", after all, did very little to help actual women attain power over their destinies in eras wherein women were considered to be little more than exotic visions of beauty or grace -- incapable of higher rationality and incapable of real power over anything but the domestic sphere. "Ladies" were treasures

higher rationality and incapability of real power over anything but the domestic sphere. Ladies were treasures who needed to be protected -- not simply treated well, but shielded from important parts of a well-rounded life.

>>

If we're going to examine a victorian time period where parts of this were happening, let us also examine the very real power women did have-- social and moral standards. Women carried a tremendous amount of power in regards to particular standards. For more information, please see "The Benevolence of Manners". It's a lovely book that does a good job of demonstrating what areas women did rule.

While I certainly understand the feminist viewpoint of never being willing to accept a less than position, I do not believe that having chairs held for me, doors held for me, etc., based on a gender response makes me less. It makes me different from men.

While I would agree that in general, they are antiquated manners-- they are ones that I value highly. The fabulous beauty of feminism is that each of us is able to choose for ourselves. We have the freedom to wait for a door to be opened or to open it ourselves.

Catherine

13 [Trinity](#)

2002-11-05 21:42

<< A non-gender based example would be standing to shake the hand of a new arrival at the event, rather than just nodding a hello as you stuff your face with rubber chicken. Another would be advancing to greet someone - unless you're standing in a receiving line of course. >>

Rabid.

I agree with you. My point wasn't that people ought not to be courteous -- my point was that certain forms of courtesy don't feel so nice. When you know that the *only reason* someone did something polite for you is because they experience you as Other, rather than because they wish to honor and show respect for *you* -- well, to me that's not real respect. That's respect for a characteristic of me I didn't create, not respect for anything I chose or created.

Lady Catherine was speaking of liking and valuing that very thing -- that she is treated as Other by polite males. Not simply that someone held the door for her, say, but that someone saw her "as a lady", and did so merely because of her gender.

For me personally, such Othering makes me feel quite uncomfortable. The feminist theorist in me is also uncomfortable with that.

That to me is not the same as treating others with respect and speaking politely to them, which need not have this Othering aspect.

<< Standing when a Lady arrives or leaves - when at a 'formal' function has nothing to do with gender bias and everything to do with "being a roman in rome". It IS impolite to not observe the etiquette in someone else's house. >>

I'm not disagreeing with that either. I'm simply saying that to make such an assumption based on gender doesn't sit well with me. If I were in the house of someone who did this, I wouldn't raise my voice against it and make an argumentative scene about it. I might tell them later that it bothered me, but I wouldn't go into someone's house and start telling everyone how inappropriate my hosts are. THAT to me would be bad manners.

If it were, say, etiquette at a BDSM event that the subs stand when the doms enter or leave the room, that wouldn't bother me either.

It's only the idea that "you are a woman, and as such there's a specific set of ways you are to be treated, no matter who you are" that bothers me.

14 [Trinity](#)

2002-11-06 10:34

I think part of the thing that differentiates me from others here on the issue of manners is that I don't see them so much as about "how you were raised" as about "showing courtesy and respect". To me, simply following the

so much as about how you were raised -- as about showing courtesy and respect -- to me, simply following the patterns prescribed by some guru of etiquette can certainly be a good starting point -- I don't mean to say it can't.

What I *do* mean to say is that, *to me*, simply doing something because when you were five you got punished or scolded when you didn't isn't truly showing manners -- it's behaving in an ingrained way, because it's been trained into you. Real manners, *to me*, involve an awareness of the respect for the other person (and here I say the person, rather than zir gender or other characteristics) encoded in your action(s).

When I was ten, I wrote thank-you notes only at the repeated insistence of my parents and despised the whole business. Nowadays, I write them on fancy paper with a fountain pen, and people are pleased to get them from me -- because now, I see the point. When I was ten, I was obeying for reasons I had not internalized; now I do it because I feel I have a reason to do it. I think not about "what my mom told me I ought to do" -- I think of the person's pleasure when they see that I have handwritten them a note expressing my gratitude and put effort into making said note elegant. I think about what my gratitude will mean to them. That *for me* is the real reason to write those notes.

(This is also another issue I could bring up about obedience in terms of D/s: I personally could never expect someone to obey some rule if they didn't understand and accept the reason for that rule. I hope not to start another long angry thread with that one :) but I feel strongly about it.)

The difference is that if you then examine those behaviors and affirm them as markers of courtesy and respect for others, they are then imbued with real meaning. I wasn't thanking those people when I was ten; I was getting Mom off my back. I *am* thanking them now.

So I think what one thinks of etiquette and manners-related norms has a lot to do with all this. If you read over what Miss Manners says and agree, it's one thing. If you read over what she says and think it's silly but that for some reason you ought to abide by it (memories of punishment, perhaps?) then I personally don't think you are being as respectful.

15 [firebaby](#)

2002-11-06 10:50

"The difference is that if you then examine those behaviors and affirm them as markers of courtesy and respect for others, they are then imbued with real meaning. I wasn't thanking those people when I was ten; I was getting Mom off my back. I *am* thanking them now."

Trinity, that is, in my opinion, a perfect explanation of what i feel also. Only when one acts out of sincerely felt respect and consideration for someone else is the gesture truly valuable.

Which means that when i see that so few people actually perform those courtesies, i interpret it as a fast-metastasizing inconsideration on the part of many members of society. We're becoming selfish, in my view, and i don't like it much.

Peace
firebaby

16 [memneth](#)

2002-11-06 11:57

Nor are we setting the example for our kids or young people. We have become and have been a very much "me" society for years now. We want what we want and we want it delivered by fed-ex, next day air on a red carpet and silver tray, if not sooner, because....we want it. Manners don't seem to have done well in that enviroment.

Justin Medlin

17 [willbehis4ever](#)

2002-11-06 12:40

There is one thing that I don't understand in this discussion. When I use my manners ...they are always meant exactly as they were intended. They were taught to me by my parents, not ingrained. If I choose not to write thank you notes as an adult, it is because I have rejected the belief that they are necessary (and my Mama would think me a bad, bad girl!) If I write them it is because I mean it...THANK YOU!<grin> If I show you respect...then I respect you...until you show ME that you can't be respected. If you hold a chair for me, or a door,

etc., it is assumed that you think me a lady unless and until I lift my skirt and say, "Hey, you want some baby?" (of course that is if I don't know you...:smile::)

In a social situation, a submissive that is respectful, watchful at all times for what her Dominant is communicating to her or him would be one that I would want to emulate. The Dominant that is respectful, self-confident and has a presence would be one that I would find interesting. A loud, borish, "do as I want" Dominant, one with no sense of decorum, would be one that I would find extremely uninteresting. I am not talking about people with no personality, but people that know how to act in social situations according to the circumstance. I would call that class.

Having and using manners does not make you a weak person. It doesn't make you less of a feminist. Quite frankly, manners to me, is just another way of being nice, of thinking of the other person before myself. I believe that you have much more influence, much more clout, if people find you enjoyable to be around. Being blunt is not always the best way to go about making a point. Being a doormat is not the way to get what you want out of life. Surely there is a happy medium out there? Having and using manners is one way to strike that "happy medium"

As for the strides that women have made in society, it is my contention that for as much as we have gained, we have given up just as much, maybe more.

me(cherry)

18 [TheirFaerieGirl](#)

2002-11-06 17:02

I don't know if this is on topic or not. But, i recently found myself in the situation along with my sub/hub of being the "in house sub" if not the "house sub" (meaning i was staying in the house of two dominate people but was not at that time "theirs" i was a guest just like any other guest)at a play party. Now, no one expected me/us to take care of the Doms present. They were all used to our hosts not having subs and everyone took care of their own drink needs, etc unless they had brought their own subs and then it was up to them. (*looks back at that sentence, finds it lacking in puncutation, grammer, etc debates whether to leave it as is or take it out and shoot it, decides to leave it as is*).

But, being sub(even if i wasn't currently subbing to anyone), and having good manners, i took it upon myself. I scurried about, called everyone Sir or Ma'am unless asked not to. Making sure everyone had drinks, learning preferances, (I now more about how that crowd takes their coffee than anyone alive), etc.

Roo (not a small kangaroo but my subs nickname short for andrew) knows more about their collective food tastes, religious food alergies, and diets than any man alive.

Like I said, it was done out of good manners. To the credit of those present at the time, they appreciated it and showed it.

We have attended several other parties in that house, have done the same thing. I ended up with a Master out of the deal. When I wasnt looking for one. Manners are a GOOD thing.

Suzette

19 [notnilla](#)

2002-11-06 19:10

<<I agree with you. My point wasn't that people ought not to be courteous -- my point was that certain forms of courtesy don't feel so nice. When you know that the *only reason* someone did something polite for you is because they experience you as Other, rather than because they wish to honor and show respect for *you* -- well, to me that's not real respect. That's respect for a characteristic of me I didn't create, not respect for anything I chose or created.

Lady Catherine was speaking of liking and valuing that very thing -- that she is treated as Other by polite males. Not simply that someone held the door for her, say, but that someone saw her "as a lady", and did so merely because of her gender. >>

Actually, perhaps the real difference is that I understand how this concept varies for me. From someone I know well, perhaps it is respect. From lesser known people I would merely count it as courteous behavior. No more, no less. Also, the concept of otherness sits well with me.

<<It's only the idea that "you are a woman, and as such there's a specific set of ways you are to be treated, no matter who you are" that bothers me.>>

I would be even more specific than this. I believe there are many types of women. There are tomboy women, butch women and nose bleed high femmes-- just to name a few. I would say my concept of manners applies only to specific types of women.

Now onto the expressed opinion that if a gesture is done with sincerity it is more meaningful as opposed to a gesture that is done out of habit or societal demand. I do understand that it may have more meaning for someone individually, however, what do all of you make of the concept that manners are a form of social restraint that allows society to function cleanly?

And Suzette, I think you're right-- advertising one's manners by merely using them is an excellent introduction for anyone.

Catherine

20 [memneth](#)

2002-11-06 22:19

We functioned better when manners and courtesy were more prevalent and much more seen as a whole. I think that we have reached the point that when you notice something being polite, courteous because it is NOT common place anymore, then we have already turned a corner down a street that makes us less as a society as a whole. It is sad that there are less examples of good manners and common courtesy displayed publicly today, especially since we are all example to the children and young people coming behind us. I am not conservative for the most part, but there are aspects that used to be more in place than are now and again, in my opinion, we are worse for it.

Justin Medlin

21 [rabidchihauhau](#)

2002-11-06 23:23

Trinity,

and if you were courteous enough to handle it in that manner, I would most sincerely apologize for having stepped on your toes and would not commit the same infraction again.

The clash of culture is interesting though. My intention in standing would not be to offend, but instead to show respect. You would see it as something different. If we didn't talk - potentially big huffy scene.

I seem to remember Monty Python bits (or maybe it was Mork?) that played off such a clash. The 'proper' form of greeting in 'my' country is a healthy smack across the face. Imagine the dignitaries arriving from overseas, not forewarned by modern technology...

I guess all we can really do is try our best from the context we find ourselves in and try not to take offense until we find out whether it was intended or not.

Maybe that's why they had 'formal' ways to declare a duel - you needed to be sure your honor had been offended before setting out to kill someone.

22 [knyghtflyher](#)

2002-11-07 00:23

(General Posting)

Looking at the "Webster" definitions, and then reading these posts I have come to an interesting, at least to me, conclusion:

Etiquette=manners=protocol

All the definitions speak of a set of "rules" dictated by some other "power", be that "power" a "society", a "convention", or something else. They all describe something that is generally "accepted" in whatever milieu you might find yourself. I can quite easily use any of the three words above to describe what happens when you sit at a "formal" dinner, with a half-dozen or more forks, numerous spoons, several knives, many plates, cups, and glasses, all to be used by one diner. There is a "protocol" to the correct usage of each one of those implements dictated by "etiquette" and in doing so, exhibiting "manners".

Perhaps, in our BDSM community, if something like that "community" really exists, we might have slightly different "meanings" to attach to each of those "words", but, in truth, IMNSHO, they are the same.

I have heard Master Doug, from the Sanctuary in Atlanta, describing "Old Guard" protocol as a combination of Emily Post and the Uniform Code of Military Justice. Makes sense to me.

What do you think?????

Knyghtflyher

23 [nixie1201](#)

2002-11-07 00:57

This is a long thread, with many truly wonderful ideas and points of view. However there is one concept that Trinity and a few others have touched on, but not clarified.

The current "problem" with society, be it in general or just in this setting, is not so much a lack of Etiquette, protocol or manners - but rather a complete and total absense of any awareness beyond the self. An vast majority of people never see outside the confines of their own tiny mind. They have no concept how their words or actions affect the other humans around them. Lacking that awareness, people frequently thrash about causing freinds, family and co-workers in their lives unecessary anxiety. And the sad thing is - all the friends, family and co-workers are usually equally unaware of precisely what it is causing them the anxiety. It becomes a generalized dissatisfaction with life.

Every day I hear comments about how "everyone ignores me" or "no one respects me" or "why don't people listen to me" - maybe.. just maybe.. it's because you don't ever pay attention to them, you don't respect them and you sure as hell don't listen. (that was by no means directed at anyone on this board! Just a generalization to illustrate a point).

For manners and protocal to be effective people must first be aware of and care about the reactions of the world around them. You have to feel a basic desire to be considerate of others, or a least a desire NOT to incur their displeasure when you screw up. Once you have that desire, then you will - as Trinity pointed out - do things from the heart, because you mean it. You will accept the unspoken rules behind the protocal and manners because you CHOOSE to belong to that social setting. Without the awareness, you can't make that choice. Or if you do - the choice is meaningless. Whether you choose a formalized approach or a casual approach is up to you and the circle of people you interact with.. but the fact that you are able to see a choice at all means you are already a step ahead of the zombies that wander this planet.

blinks Okay - I had no idea I was going to spit that much out. Hope it makes sense... I should know better than to read this stuff at 1am.

nixie

24 [rabidchihauhau](#)

2002-11-07 08:26

Isn't one of the definitions of psychopathology that you either can't or don't care/appreciate how your actions affect others?

Are we living in a nation of psychopaths?

25 [Trinity](#)

2002-11-07 11:03

nixie,

Right on! Thank you for clarifying my point so well. *smile*

<< The current "problem" with society, be it in general or just in this setting, is not so much a lack of Etiquette, protocol or manners - but rather a complete and total absense of any awareness beyond the self. >>

Yes. That's what I meant. I don't feel that simply teaching people etiquette will restore their awareness of others. Telling people where to put the salad fork isn't going to teach them to respect others.

That said, I do think there's sometimes a potential for using manners to get people's attention directed properly. If people learns from Miss Manners to make eye contact and shake hands, well, that puts them into more contact with the other person than if they never looked the other in the eye or never took zir hand. This could lead to a higher level of regard for the other, certainly.

But I think that we're skating a fine line when we suppose that simply bringing manners back will fix this problem -- one has to be sure that others will latch on not only to the behavior, but to the regard for others that's intended to be coded within it.

I can say "Hey Joe, how's it goin'?" and slap him on the shoulder in greeting and have more real regard for Joe than someone else who says "Greetings, Joseph. Are you well?" and crisply reaches for his hand.

This doesn't imply that manners are always empty or are useless (there are dtimes and places where being buddy-buddy with Joe are right out), but I do think that it calls into attention that reintroducing manners may, for some people, treat the symptom rather than the disease.

26 [notnilla](#)

2002-11-07 11:47

<<This doesn't imply that manners are always empty or are useless, but I do think that it calls into attention that reintroducing manners may, for some people, treat the symptom rather than the disease.>>

This is a good point. Manners of and in themselves are not enough. They are merely one more ingredient which I believe must be included to cook the recipe for a thoughtful and deliberate society.

As a society, we have never quite recovered from the me generation of the 1920's. It was a ball that began it's role and we haven't quite ever again reached the unified community standards for behavior that once were in place.

In its stead, we have the immediate gratification generations. These generations may believe themselves to be self aware, however, self aware means a lot more than completing a sentence that begins with "I want...." We are not providing the skills sets for communication, personal ownership/responsibility, or self-esteem in our schools. As adults we either get it through reading, therapy, Oprah or if we're lucky learning the lessons of life as they are given to us.

So, could manners even begin to take care of all of that? Certainly not. However, is it one part of the solution? Absolutely.

Catherine

27 [memneth](#)

2002-11-07 12:16

Let's set the formal aside for a moment. I would much rather see someone run into Joe (my roomates name) and slap him on the back, smile and actually say hello, than to simply run over him, cut him and push him aside as they went through the door with a pissed off look on their face because he deigned to live and breath the same air as they currently do. And that's the state of "everyday manners" as a whole today. People do not take responsibility for themselves, their actions or the actions of their children. I knew we had gone to hell in a hand basket when I saw the first body harness and leash on a child about 10-12 years ago. I'm sorry, but I do believe that manners and respect are in no small part taught.....or not taught to people as children, not so much the formal manners perhaps, but everyday ways of being polite and respectful of other human beings. We have lost that for the most part.

Justin Medlin

28 [firebaby](#)

2002-11-07 19:16

i agree with you, Justin. i think, however, that the lack of manners and simple courtesy is not a problem; rather it's a symptom. You could work hard (and it would mean working very hard) to eliminate discourtesy, but it wouldn't mean a thing in the larger picture - the underlying cause would still be there, and still be unaddressed. i don't personally believe that teaching people to better mask themselves is any kind of answer. But then again, i always did care much more deeply about how things actually are than how they appear to be. ::shrug::

Peace
firebaby

29 [rabidchihauhau](#)

2002-11-07 22:23

Memneth,

Child harnesses say 'I don't care enough to keep track of where my child is'. I hate them.

On the other hand, I wonder how many kinksters got their first taste of bondage that way...

30 [nixie1201](#)

2002-11-08 01:08

It's more than that Rabidchihauhau - child harnesses are a sign that says "I'm too lazy and incompent to teach my child how to behave in public and stand beside me." It's the same as those horrid retractable leashes every gets for their dogs "I'm to lazy to teach my dog to heal so I use this instead".

Which plays into the responsibility issue and strays slightly off topic. When parents can't even be responsible for teaching their children basic public behavior - the child grows up with an innate handicap. Manners should be taught to children, but if the parents have neglected their own manners, then what? While I feel bad for the child that is never taught - ya know what? When you turn 18, your parents are not responsible for you.

On that day you are given a choice. You can either be nothing more than the sum of your childhood, live your life blaming your parents for all their shortcomings and bemoan the things you never learned - OR you can choose to become something better. Choose to be the person you wish your parents had been. Everyone can improve themselves - just some of us prefer to have someone guiding/controlling that improvement *grin*.

Or you can remain clueless for the rest of you life. Which was my first point - that most never become aware there was a choice.

And to bring this back to manners - you choose to be courteous and respectful of the people around you because it's simply the right thing to do. Being surrounded by a society that lacks these basic concepts doesn't entitle anyone to act boorish. It's up to each individual person to be responsible for themselves - and to behave accordingly. If you do - it's a trickle effect. People around you start returning the sentiment - slowly but they will. Then again - I'm an optimist.

~ nixie (who is having a hard time with staying in the shadows now)

31 [notnilla](#)

2002-11-08 02:09

So I have a question. If as a society we're not being taught manners and not seeing them practiced in general, perhaps this is yet another appeal for formal protocol that seems to be so popular among BDSM practitioners?

Catherine

32 [memneth](#)

2002-11-08 05:18

To some extent, yes I believe that to be true. The down side is that it also seems to draw more and more people to the Order Of The Twice Basted Royal Pressed Double Ruptured Duck, who seem to enjoy recounting stories of running the hounds on 15th century snipe hunts and other Secret Society Crap (SSC). It does make me wonder if formal manners have gone so far away as to only exist in fantasy and thus lets make it a fantasy that is so good that if if we told anyone the truth about it, we'd have to kill them.

Justin Medlin
YDWPFWEP

33 [Trinity](#)

2002-11-08 10:27

<< It does make me wonder if formal manners have gone so far away as to only exist in fantasy and thus lets make it a fantasy that is so good that if if we told anyone the truth about it, we'd have to kill them. >>

To an extent I think this is true. I find that even in the BDSM world protocol can often be puzzling, and I think the fantasy effect may be why. People who have protocols that make sense often don't talk about why they have the protocols or rules they do. Instead, folks who come up with highfalutin, impossibly bad, online-fantasy-style rules, like "The 128 Slave Rules", are often the only people who go into detail about protocols.

Then, people like me who are less protocol oriented, look at that and go "Protocol sounds like some weird fantasy thing, and like something that pulls people apart rather than bringing them together/enriching their intimacy." It's very hard to look at heavy protocol as anything but some weird fantasy when, when looking for examples, often all you can find are fancy rulesets that don't make much sense and that no one can realistically follow all the time.

34 [notnilla](#)

2002-11-08 11:59

Trinity, I believe there is merit to what you are saying. I also know that I am fortunate enough to know several people who can explain why each and every protocol is in place.

Many of these reasons are extremely solid and make good sense to me.

As for what I use, probably the one that makes the least amount of sense is the one I have about hovering. I don't allow anyone I own to hover over me. If I am sitting, they are sitting. I want their head below mine in almost all situations (there are a few clearly defined exceptions to this as well).

My reasons for this are: 1) it's rude to stand over someone; 2) being stood over in general annoys me; 3) I think it's inappropriate for me to have to look up into the eyes of the servant I own; and 4) this is a physical protocol that aids in allowing my property to have a physical, tangible reinforcer of their submissive space.

Catherine

35 [willbehis4ever](#)

2002-11-08 15:23

I just wonder if anyone feels the way I do about this? From a submissive point of view, protocols give me security. I don't mean the kind that dehumanize, but those that define. They define my space and let me know what is expected of me. Even when it is not a highly formalized situation, having certain rules of behavior, things that just don't change help me. Of course, the manners I learned as a child always stand me in good stead, but those that are sort of accepted practiced in the community allow me to go into a situation I am unsure of and know that I won't totally mortify or reflect badly on the Big He. Actually, he probably doesn't much care what others think of him as long as he is satisfied, but I care if I reflect badly.

Feeling that sense of security, that certainty of what is expected makes me feel extremely intimate with him and as I said before...secure.

me(cherry)

36 [Trinity](#)

2002-11-08 18:05

Catherine,

Actually, that one **does** make sense. :)

I like the feeling of someone not being higher/being lower than me as well (especially since I'm so short I'm usually lower by default; it really gets my mind space going to reverse that). I don't know that I'd be as formal about it as you are, but I can definitely see using it as a tool to get those involved into the right mental state.

Thanks for the example!

37 [notnilla](#)

2002-11-08 18:50

cherry,

That makes perfect sense. What you are talking about in essence is understanding the guidelines or if you will, the details of the structure that you are involved in.

This is a matter of clarity. One must be clear as to expectations of behavior and delivery. It provides security and allows you to value judge what you do. I would dare say all of us wish to be "good" and to do the right thing in the right situation. Protocols/rules allow one to immediately judge if you are in the right or not.

This is a basic idea to ownership. This is basic to creating an environment for success and secure servants.

Trinity, you're more than welcome. It was my pleasure.

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