

Should Children Address Adults as Mr. or Mrs.?

When was the last time you addressed someone by their last name? If you're like most of society, it's probably been a while, even if you are an individual under the age of 18.

After pondering the decline of Mr. and Mrs. the other day, I was pleasantly surprised to see Danielle Larkins address the same issue in [The Washington Post](#). Despite being in her young thirties, she distinctly recalled addressing her elders by their last name accompanied by the appropriate title. But such is the case no more and Ms. Larkins tries to puzzle out why.

"I'm not judging other parents for how they raise their children, despite my disagreement on this topic. I just don't understand why the tradition stopped. Has our culture lost its respect for its elders? Have we just become a more informal society? Or maybe our desire to elevate our kids' self worth has gone overboard, and we don't want our kids to feel they are 'beneath' anyone else. When I've asked other parents why they don't teach their children to address adults by their surname they seem uncertain – as if it is the first time they've thought about it. My guess is that they succumb to the rationale that 'everyone else is doing it so I will too.'"

Addressing adults with a title and their last name may seem old-fashioned and obscure, but it establishes several important values including:

- Respect – Using titles and last names diminishes the familiarity which comes from a first-name basis. And by diminishing familiarity, one also diminishes the contempt which famously springs from said familiarity.
- Authority – Titles and last names exalt the wisdom and

experience of those who are farther along the path of life, but a first-name basis places every age on a peer-to-peer level.

- Family Togetherness – Last name usage demonstrates the connections and interrelatedness of a family, and in a society plagued by broken families it seems they need all the forms of togetherness they can muster.

Today's culture seems to struggle with many of these same values. It may seem like a small thing, but is it possible that simply teaching young people to address their elders by last name would help to restore some level of respect for authority while also building up the family, the most fundamental unit of society?

[Image Credit](#)