

Why Don't More People Teach Manners?

As I was walking out the door of a CVS last week, a woman walked right into a man standing in place and kept going without a word. The man was visibly perturbed, and finally after a few seconds asked with exasperation, "Could you please just say 'I'm sorry?'" He sounded desperate, as if in search of just one remaining relic of common decency in society.

I don't think he is alone.

My own husband frequently laments the demise of the words "Excuse me," both when someone has bumped into you or when someone would like to get past. I've noticed the rise of a new phenomenon in the aisles of various stores and markets in Washington, DC, in which, rather than just utter those words, a person will stand and stare at you, sometimes for a weirdly long amount of time, rather than just say, "Excuse me." And I've noticed that when I find myself needing to get past someone and they can't see me and I cheerfully exclaim the pleasantry, I get looked at like I just said something like, "Cancer is awesome." People *actually give me dirty looks* for saying, "Excuse me."

Then I sit down at night and watch Netflix's *The Crown* and wonder what the deuce happened in just a handful of decades?

Seriously, what happened to manners? I get that the days of hat-tipping and curtsying are long gone, but yesterday a man belched in my face and didn't even look embarrassed. Is it all over? Is civilization on course to become a modern-day Zootopia?

I don't exactly know what happened, but one [British couple in Florida](#) has set out to change things. They've started offering "etiquette lessons" to kids from toddlers to teenagers,

teaching “vital skills such as how to behave at dinner, maintaining the correct posture, how to set a table and learning how to politely respond to questions and look people in the eye.” According to the older couple, they want to help equip these children for something pretty basic: the ability to “socialize.”

“[O]nce they learn these skills it stays with them their whole lives,” one of them told the *Daily Mail*.

They make an important point. Manners are not just some fanciful tradition. For starters, they are about treating others with respect, a word we never seem to hear the end of in the post-liberal P.C. world. But manners are also like a little tool-box that helps you function as an adult. Without manners, children will grow into adults with major handicaps when it comes to dating, working, and simply maintaining meaningful relationships. Like feeding kids a decent diet and giving them an education, teaching kids manners is rightfully considered a basic part of helping them to thrive.

And our British friends in Florida are not the only ones to figure this out. *The New York Times* featured [the rise in manner classes](#) for kids, the men’s blog “The Art of Manliness” features a [post](#) on table manners as an “essential skill for men,” and manners guru Emily Post and her daughter wrote a book called [Mr. Manners](#), attributing Barack Obama’s ascendance to the Oval Office to his polished etiquette.

As another accomplished American statesman, Supreme Court Justice Clarence Thomas once put it, “Good manners will open doors that the best education cannot.”

We can’t all be rich, beautiful, smart, or charming, but we can all have good manners, if someone is kind enough to teach us.

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