



Children's Manners & Etiquette Classes
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Helpful Tips to Encourage the Use of Good Manners

We all recognize that the world we live in today is mega fast-paced. We get nearly immediate gratification for many of our needs and wants - thanks to drive-through service, the internet, and cell phones to name a few. The unfortunate result is a society that is often self-centered, in-your-face rude, and even angry. Consideration for others and social decorum is seldom the first response for many people.

However... hope remains for a more civil, courteous society. Since "actions speak louder than words", parents have real power through modeling behavior to teach kindness, responsibility, composure, and compassion.

Here are a few ideas that will encourage children to practice good manners and proper social behavior:

1. Be a good example. Children emulate adult behavior.
2. Plan at least one sit down meal a week with the family. Remind children about table manners as issues arise. This is also the perfect time for engaging in cheerful family discussion, which promotes the skill of pleasant conversation with others. Children can also help set the table, and clean up.
3. Speak well of others. The old rule of "If you don't have something nice to say, don't say anything at all", is still a good one to enforce. Talk to your children about how they would feel if someone was speaking badly about them.
4. Winning and losing with grace can be tough. Strong emotions often follow victories and defeats. Children can learn that games and competitions are just one part of life. Their importance as a person does not hinge on wins or losses. Have children thank their opponent after a game, and remind them that there wouldn't be a game without the opponent.
5. Children need to know that as an important part of the family, their contribution is of value. Chores can be made more enjoyable by putting on music while working, or setting up simple rewards such as a picnic lunch in the yard once chores are completed.
6. Children can learn at a very young age that they are able to *choose* to have the right attitude. We all feel "yucky" at times, but we don't need to behave in "yucky" ways. We all possess the ability to simply decide to have a good outlook, no matter what the circumstances.
7. Reinforce the "golden rule" of treating others how you would want to be treated. Children can be reminded to treat others with respect, kindness, helpfulness, and forgiveness.
8. Regarding the Internet: Children should never give out any personal information, including names of friends. Instruct them never to arrange to meet someone that they met online. Something that seems innocent to them may be a real danger.
9. Keep anger under wraps. When your child sees you handle situations with calm and self control, you're teaching your child to do the same. (This even applies when we get stuck in a traffic jam and are in a terrific hurry!)
10. Set up your own sessions to practice good manners. You could have a tea party, or play a game with your child. Point out that using good behavior makes the event more enjoyable for everyone. Teaching your child to clean up after themselves can translate later in life to effectively taking care of life's more important issues.