

The importance of good manners



“YOU ONLY HAVE
SECONDS TO MAKE
A GOOD IMPRESSION.
MAKE IT POSITIVE.”

- FRANK SONNENBERG

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Can you read people's minds? It's not really that hard. What do people think when they see someone eat with their mouth open, slam the door in someone's face, cut someone off in the middle of a sentence, shout across the room, use foul language, look like a slob, bark orders instead of saying "please" and "thank you" ... and the list goes on. They're probably thinking "He has no manners; she should know better. What a loser." (Ouch.)

Manners certainly count when you're interviewing for a job, meeting your significant other's parents for the first time, or having lunch with an important customer. But manners also count even when there's no special occasion. Although friends and colleagues may not say anything, they absolutely notice, and probably judge, how you behave every day. You'd know that if you could read their minds.

Why Should You Care About Manners?

Knowing where to place your fork and knife doesn't mean that you have good manners. Having proper manners simply means that your behavior is socially acceptable; you know how to behave so that you don't embarrass yourself or worse yet, cause others to feel uncomfortable.

Why should you care about manners? The consequences are huge.

- **Show what you're made of.** Good or bad manners say volumes about you and your upbringing. Manners show politeness and demonstrate an awareness of self-worth, respect for others, and a desire to fit in.
- **Make a good impression.** You only have seconds to make a good impression. Make it positive. Remember to have a firm handshake, give your undivided attention, look him or her in the eye when you're speaking, and listen till they're finished before responding. Dress for success, but also remember your manners.
- **Give of yourself.** Manners shift the attention from you toward others. Manners are a good way for you to show gratitude, display respect, and demonstrate kindness.
- **Demonstrate trustworthy behavior.** Good manners are a strong indication of how you'll behave in the future. They indicate whether you're dependable, reliable, and selfless. These are critical elements in building trusting personal and business relationships. People who are rude, inconsistent, or selfish ultimately suffer the consequences.
- **Do yourself proud.** People are judged by the company they keep. So folks may be asking themselves, "Do we want to be associated with this person?" "Would we be proud to have this person represent our organization?" "Will this individual be a good fit with our team?"
- **Stand out among your peers.** All things being equal, good manners can set you apart from the crowd. Manners can be an important factor in achieving success.
- **Set an example.** If you're a parent, teacher, coach,

religious leader, or manager, you're influencing people every day. Make a conscious effort to be a good role model.

What Do Your Manners Say About You?

Some folks with poor manners offer the excuses, "I never learned" or "I don't have the time." Yet others, with huge egos, may think, "I'm the boss. Manners don't apply to me." The fact is, it doesn't take more effort to show your appreciation nor does it require more time to be pleasant. Good manners help make folks feel good about themselves, as well as help make others feel good about you.

Most people know how to put on a show when a situation matters; the key is to behave properly even when it doesn't. The truth is, when behaviors are repeated again and again, they turn into habits. And old habits die hard. Manners matter. As Laurence Sterne, the author, said, "Respect for ourselves guides our morals; respect for others guides our manners." Don't wait for someone to remind you, or worse, don't learn from an embarrassing situation — all it requires is a conscious choice. So next time you're deciding whether to wait your turn, respond in a timely fashion, or keep someone waiting ... Mind your manners!

This is adapted from *BOOKSMART: Hundreds of real-world lessons for success and happiness* by Frank Sonnenberg released November 2016.



Frank is an award-winning author. He has written six books and over 300 articles. Frank was recently named one of "America's Top 100 Thought Leaders" and one of America's Most Influential Small Business Experts. Frank has served on several boards and has consulted to some of the largest and most respected companies in the world. Additionally, *FrankSonnenbergOnline* was named among the "Best 21st Century

Leadership Blogs,” among the “Top 100 Socially-Shared Leadership Blogs,” and one of the “Best Inspirational Blogs On the Planet.” Frank’s new book, *BookSmart: Hundreds of real-world lessons for success and happiness* was released November 2016. © 2018 Frank Sonnenberg. All rights reserved.

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