



## Manners really do matter

Over the last couple of weeks, I have been thinking about how we communicate and why it really matters. Bullying, innuendoes, and yelling have become the norm in many of our conversations, meetings, and blogs. Courteous debate has been replaced with public shouting matches. Common practice implies that inappropriate comments are fair if you win or destroy the other guy! In many forums, the end justifying the means has become an acceptable practice.

At what point do we stop a meeting and demand more respectful discourse without squelching an individual's right to free speech? When will we demand that bloggers get their point across without defaming those who don't share their opinion?

How do we return to more respectful communication?

- We need to have the courage of our convictions and speak up when dialogue has crossed the line. We need to move all of our meetings, dialogues, and discussions (public, private, at home, and at work) into a realm where everyone can be heard and no one is disrespected. This is not easy; it requires that we take a public stand and defend appropriate and polite communication.
- We need to practice what we preach by chairing courteous meetings that allowing participants to challenge ideas respectfully without resorting to shouting matches.
- We need to model common courtesies such as saying "please" and "thank you". We need to say "Good Morning" to colleagues and welcome customers into our libraries. These are small but important ways of respecting others.
- We need to have the courage to apologize when we slip back into old ways and to make a renewed effort to be mannerly in all of our communications.

Good manners open doors and allow people to hear what we really have to say. We need to welcome Ms. Manners back to our legislatures, schools, libraries, and homes. It is not "prissy" or unreasonable to expect our peers, friends, and family to communicate in a respectful and considerate manner.

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