

TEACHING YOUR KIDS TO BE THOUGHTFUL

Sally Burgess, Forefront Families LLC

My husband and I facilitate a church kinship group at our home every week, and we are always grateful when group members volunteer to help in cleaning up. There is one girl who, although pregnant, always puts the chairs away and helps with cleaning the dishes. This week we had a baby shower for her, and although she was guest of honor, she and her husband were the only ones who were still there, washing dishes when everyone else had gone. Why is it that some people anticipate the needs of others, while others simply walk away?

How do we teach children to be considerate of others? It comes as a direct result of how we, as parents, model thoughtfulness. Thoughtfulness is an important family value. It is being respectful. Kids will learn, whether we actually tell them or not. They watch us and then they copy. If we display thoughtfulness, at the same time explaining reasons and ways in which the family can show thoughtfulness to each other, then the child will see the benefits and want to experience it for themselves. When they know how this feels, they are likely to want to pass this on to others.

Thinking of 'what is best for others before what is best for me' was deeply ingrained in my subconscious without me being able to recall it ever being mentioned at home. Obviously it was demonstrated, and I adopted the practice. I knew it was important to pass on.

Another important value under the heading of respectfulness is courteousness. Many times since we have been in the U.S.A we have heard adults and children say, 'I want', or, 'Give me' in a restaurant without a 'Please' or 'Thank you'. As the children of these families hear disrespectful requests, they get the message that this is the way you speak to people who serve you. A person who displays respect, gains respect from others, while those who display bad manners are not respected either. Negative repercussions will follow them through all aspects of their lives.

I was at a craft show last year and several people were at my booth waiting to be served. As I approached one customer, she said in a beautiful polished English accent, "I would be delighted to wait while you serve the others." I was taken aback. This was not just good manners, this was courteousness to the extreme. I spoke with her for some time and was intrigued by her mindset. I will never forget her, and if I ever saw her again I would be thinking of extreme ways to serve her better.

Respectfulness has very positive repercussions. However, our actions should not be motivated by what we can get, but rather the pleasure we gain from doing what is best for others.

If you have any comments or questions on this subject, please do not hesitate to contact us at sally@forefrontfamilies.org. We invite you to also check out our website at www.forefrontfamilies.org and our blog site at www.forefrontfamilies.blogspot.com for further assistance.