

Character Trait of the Month: RESPECT

September

What is Respect?

The Dictionary defines it as “due regard for the feelings, wishes, rights, or traditions of others”.

Respecting ourselves

What does it mean to respect ourselves?

When we respect ourselves we act, dress, and speak in a way that we are able to show what we feel is important to us and our moral beliefs. There are times that we will be around people who say, do and act in a manner that can make us feel uncomfortable. If there is anything you feel uneasy with, you should stop, think about what is making you feel uneasy, and consider walking away or reaching out to an adult for help or guidance.

Is it more important to be popular or is it more important to be honest?

Scenario: There is a really tough math test coming up and several of your friends have asked that you show them your math test answer sheet as you are taking the test. You have a choice to be honest, take your test following directions and not cheating, but you may have some friends who are angry with you, or helping your friends cheat on the test and keeping your friends happy.

- 1) People who ask you to cheat are not showing you respect. They are leading you to trouble instead of building you up. Respecting people is showing them that you care about them no matter the differences, even if it is in the way you believe and study.
- 2) You are not respecting yourself if you turn away from your beliefs to make someone else happy. There are times we have to work as a team and may have to come to a compromise, but this should never involve breaking the rules or laws.

Is it more important to be nice or viewed as part of the popular group?

Scenario: In school, many of us fall into our friend groups. Each group represents a part of who we are. There are the groups that are involved in sports. There are the groups that are involved in the arts. There are the groups that are involved in video games. We all find the groups that we fit into by the things we have in common. At times, the groups we fit into focus on the type of clothes or shoes a person wears. While at the mall a group of teenagers is sitting at a table with their sodas pointing and laughing at people and what they are wearing. You see them as you are walking through the mall and notice what they are doing. Do you go up and join them in making

fun of the people around them because they are your friends or do you choose not join in intentionally making people feel badly?

Most of the time we choose friends who believe similarly to us, so if we feel strongly about being kind to others and showing others respect, our friends will feel the same way. People do not respect you if they try to push you into doing or acting in a manner that you are not comfortable with or do not feel is right.

What do you want people to think about you? There are all sorts of sayings out there: "Dress for success." "Dress for the job you want." "Dress the way you want to be seen". There are many studies that show the way we dress affects the way people view us. Sometimes we dress to keep people from seeing who we are or how we feel about ourselves. Other times, we want to fit in and we choose clothes based on what we think everyone else will approve of instead of the way we feel about ourselves. In both cases, we are not being respectful of ourselves. Our clothes are an outward extension of our personalities and our belief system and will give people their first impression. This is one of the reasons schools provide a dress code. This keeps the focus on learning and not on our clothing. We can show ourselves, our teachers and school faculty, and fellow students respect by following the dress code set out by the schools.

Respect Online:

Once something is posted online, it is on the internet forever. We need to remember that people will look at what we post online to see what type of person we are. We respect ourselves by only posting and sharing items that represent who we want to be seen, not just now but in our future. Do not send pictures or messages that you would not share publicly yourself, as anything sent through technology can be reposted. You are becoming educated and preparing for the future that you want, whether that is with a specific career or a family. Hiring managers have stated they will pull social media profiles as part of the hiring process. So here are two things to consider when you post on social media or send something through technology: 1) Could this affect my change of getting the job that I want? 2) Would this be something I would be embarrassed for my parents or my children to see?

We respect other people

We will all have times in our lives that we do not agree with other people. We may not like what people say. We may not like how they dress. We may not like what people stand for. No matter what our feelings are, we show respect by continuing to be polite and not criticizing the person or people. We continue to treat them as we would want to be treated.

Looks vs Attitudes

We all look different. Some of us are short; some of us are tall. Some of us have blonde hair; some of us have dark hair. Some of us are muscular; some of us are not. Just like the way we all look is different, we have different strengths and weaknesses.

Some of us are artists, others are good at sports. Some of us have math as our favorite subject and others have history as our favorite subject. Each of us has character traits that make us unique. By focusing on what we have in common and remember that none of us are exactly the same, we can learn to respect the things we do have in common. My best friend and I look completely different. I am short, blonde and prefer comfortable clothing over fashionable clothing. She is tall with brown hair and ran a modeling agency in her home country before moving to the United States, so fashion is higher on her list of importance. We became friends by focusing on areas we had in common and many of them are our views on life and our principles.

Bullying

We have all heard about bullying and have heard stories of bullies. Bullying happens because one person is not showing respect to another.

Angela and Grace were best friends. Angela had decided at the beginning of the school year that she was going to try and get a part in the school play. It meant so much to her that she spent most nights memorizing and practicing lines. Grace began to feel left out since she wasn't involved with the school play. Grace began to get angry at Angela and started pointing out anytime that Angela made a mistake in the play rehearsals. One night Grace posted one of the mistakes online for everyone to see. Angela was so upset she didn't want to be in the play any longer and she didn't want to go to school. This is many times how bullying starts. One person feels left out, inadequate, or afraid of something and then begins hurting another person so they feel the same way. This can happen very easily when we are angry. The most important rule to remember is the golden rule: treat others the way you want to be treated. No one wants to be treated the way Angela was treated.

Respecting those around us:

"Time and Place" is a term that can be used to remember appropriate and respectful behavior. There is a time and place for everything. When we are in school, it is time to learn and be respectful of others by listening to the teachers and classmates during the class discussions, raising our hands and waiting for our turn to talk, and not making fun of the students in class if they get a question wrong. We are not showing respect when we are disrupting the class and not allowing the other students the ability to learn.

"Time and Place" also refers to our clothing. At the beach, we expect to see people in swimsuits and beach attire. This type of clothing would not be appropriate in our schools. Earlier clothing was mentioned for self-respect, but when we are not dressed appropriately for the time and place, we are not showing the people around us respect. We can unintentionally take the focus from where it should be, especially in school.

Example: Scott and Tyler were in their first class together. They were talking about the Superbowl commercials when the bell rang for the class to start. Scott was in the middle of talking about one of the plays, when the teacher began to teach the class. Scott really wanted to finish the discussion, so he ignored the teacher at the front of the

class and continued talking. The teacher asked for everyone's attention and reminded the class that it was time for the class. Scott continued talking and laughing about the game until he and Tyler were asked to leave the class. Was Scott showing respect to the teacher? Was he showing respect to the class? Was he showing respect to Tyler? Was he showing respect when he was talking to Tyler before class started? The difference is time and place. Both were in school, but the timing was different. Once class started, it was time to focus on the lesson the teacher was giving and stop talking.

We do not call people names. There are times that we will not agree with other people. When we do not agree with them, we can respect the difference in opinions and look for areas that we have in common. If the differences in opinion are too great, then we focus on 2 things: 1) If you don't have anything nice to say, then don't say anything at all. 2) Treat others the way you want to be treated.

We respect property

It is important that we take care of our property and other people's property. How would you feel if you saved up to buy a new car for years, bought the car, and someone came up and kicked the car because they were angry and the car was the first thing they saw? Is this showing respect to your property?

How would you feel if you had an autographed book that didn't cost anything, but it was autographed by the person that you admire, and a class mate took the book and tore it? Is that showing respect to your property?

How would you feel if you had a photograph of you and a friend who moved away that someone colored in the faces? Is that showing respect to your property?

We all have items that mean something to us in our lives, some of them are very costly and some of them did not cost much at all but have some sort of person meaning to us. We would not want someone destroying our property or even not taking proper care of our property. So, we need to show that same respect to others by respecting their property. At school, we need to take care of the books and supplies our teacher's provide, the items our classmates bring in, and the school facilities. At home, we need to take care of the house, our belongings, and the members in our family's belongings.

Respect Activity:

You cannot control another person. You can control the way you react to the other person. Review each statement and give options on how you can show the other person respect:

- 1) You are in math class and the person who was called to the board to answer a question you think is simple got the answer wrong.

- 2) You are on Instagram and you see a photo of a statement on a topic you feel very strongly about. The statement is for the opposite view you believe in and the author has called everyone who doesn't agree stupid.
- 3) You have a classmate who you do not get along with. You see a picture of her topless that was posted online.
- 4) You get pulled over for texting and driving. The police officer begins to come up to your window to get your license and registration.

