



Positive Respect: Sampler

From the original Power of Respect

By

Karen Ryce

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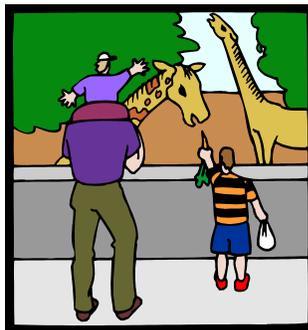
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Introduction to the Power of Respect

Karen Ryce's *Column Book: The Power of Respect* (ebook) was originally a series of weekly Questions and Answers columns entitled, "The Power of Respect" appearing in The Redwood Record, a Northern California newspaper. Community members asked questions about maintaining respect in their family relationships. The answers were published in the newspaper.

This ebook series is filled with helpful tips, techniques and guidance for anyone who wants peace, harmony, happiness and complete respect in their family life.

Volume 1: Getting Started

This is the most likely first choice. It not only specifies a way to get started, but also includes many examples of dealing respectfully with common daily problems.

Volume 2: Teens

If your interest is in restoring, or creating respectful interactions with teenagers, this is a good place to look.

Volume 3: Daily Scheduling

If some of your conflicts, problems and stresses come from scheduling problems, here you will find answers applicable to all such situations.

Volume 4: Fighting Children

This is one of the most common problem situations in families. Here you will learn how to deal with these situations respectfully.

Volume 5: Spouse Problems

This is another common problem area in families. Here is help to deal with these situations respectfully.

Volume 6: Divorce!

When this situation does come about, here you can learn to relate respectfully with your spouse and how to help your kids with the Power of Respect.

Volume 7: Grandparents

Grandparents' concerns are dealt with so that they can deal respectfully with their children and grandchildren.

GETTING STARTED

(The Original “Power of Respect”)

Q. “We’ve read some of your columns. We’ve never treated our children any different than our parents treated us, but we’re considering trying out some of what you’ve said. Our oldest daughter is nine, our son is six and our youngest daughter is three. We have no idea how to get started. What do you suggest?”

H.R., Briceland

A: Start with a family meeting. Be sure to find a time when it is convenient for everyone. Make sure that everyone is feeling good and unstressed.

If someone is in a bad mood, it is better to deal with that problem before starting the meeting. Ask them what help they need to be in a good mood for the meeting.

At the meeting explain that you want to solve problems differently in your family than you have in the past. Say clearly how you think they have been solved in the past. Ask if this seems right to everyone else.

After you have reached an understanding, tell your kids what you don’t want to do any more. Explain that from now on you would like it if everyone would do their best to solve problems in ways that feel good to everyone involved.

If you and your mate have a short example of some disagreement that you solved using brainstorming, and negotiating a win-win solution, you can offer to tell them about that as an example.

Then ask if any of your kids have a problem that they would like to share so that everyone could practice with it as a starter. Reassure them that this new way of doing things means that you end up with an answer that everyone involved feels good about.

First, wait for one of them to come up with an idea. Then tell them that you have an idea in mind if one of them can’t come up with an idea. Then wait again. It is good if one of the kids can come up with a suggestion, but it’s not essential. Maybe they need to see this process at work for them to trust that it will be good for them.

Let's say you all decide to deal with bedtimes, or meal times, or chores. Be sure you have paper and pen. For this first time it might be best for one of the adults to do the writing because they will be able to write down the ideas more quickly. You don't want to lose the kids to boredom.

However, if one of the kids wants to do the writing, and the others don't object, let them write. It can make all of the kids trust the process more.

Explain that during brainstorming, the person who is writing writes down **all** of the ideas that anyone comes up with, but that no one should worry, because only the ideas that everyone feels good about will be used. All the ideas are written down so that:

- none of the ideas are forgotten
- everyone feels respected for their contribution
- when ideas are flowing because none of them are blocked, you are more likely to discover those ideas which will solve your problem

When no one can come up with any more ideas, then you start the process of negotiating.

First you must eliminate all the ideas or parts of ideas that any one of you doesn't like. In the highly unlikely circumstance that your first brainstorming ideas are all eliminated, you can do the session again at another time, unless everyone is up for doing it then.

You settle on that idea or combination of ideas that you can all agree on. You put it into practice for a limited period of time, checking back with each other to make sure it is still working.

At the end of the meeting say that you would like all the fights and problems in the family to be settled this way, between you and your partner, between the kids or between the kids and parents.

Tell your kids that if they want your help to solve things just to let you know, and that if you hear them fighting you are going to ask them if they want help to find a win-win solution to the problem.

This process may seem time consuming, but once everyone is practiced at it, you can eliminate the writing, and finding agreements becomes almost automatic. Then the harmony in the family seems worth all the efforts at changing in the beginning.



TEEN WITH ATTITUDE

(The Original “Power of Respect”)

Q: “I’m full of admiration for my 14 year old child’s self-motivation and development. However, I do notice that the same care that is directed toward other areas is not directed toward home responsibilities. The belligerent and exasperated tone which is used by my teenage child when reminded or asked to give some help is hard to deal with, especially since these responses are becoming the normal pattern. How can I change the dynamics so that we can get out of this rut before it becomes any deeper?”

E.O., Redway

A: I’m sure you have discussed this situation with your teenager many times, but have you discussed it in terms of feelings?

Have you explained how important tone is to you and exactly how that belligerent, exasperated tone makes you feel? Have you asked your teenager if what they are feeling makes them use that tone?

Some people don't relate to tone. They relate only to content. These people don't realize that for people who relate to tone, tone can mean more than content. Tone oriented people might completely ignore content if the tone sets them off.

One reason people adopt certain terms or tones, is because these terms or tones have been directed at them in the past. Even if you have not used this tone, maybe the other parent has, or the siblings, or teachers, friends, or other adults.

The kind of attitude your teenager seems to be taking is one that people often take when they feel that their needs are not being taken into account, but they are powerless to change it.

Since this teenager is highly self-motivated, they might resent any interference in their life, especially chores, and they may use a tone or phrases that they know, consciously or unconsciously will get to you.

If it's been going on long enough, it might now just be out of habit.

If the idea of tone is not being clearly understood, you might record some of your family interactions. People get a much clearer idea of what they are saying and how they are saying it when they hear it recorded.

However, before you do any recording, explain what you are intending to do and why. Be sure you have a clear agreement before you do it. Don't do it if you cannot do it in a way that feels okay to everyone involved.

Sometime when you are both feeling good, when neither of you has anything you have to get done right away, and the general atmosphere is unstressed, tell your teenager that you need their help.

If you think you might have trouble expressing yourself clearly and simply with non-threatening words, write down beforehand what you want to talk about and resolve. State the problem in terms of yourself and your needs: "I need..." "I feel...when you..."

Through this discussion you may discover that your teen:

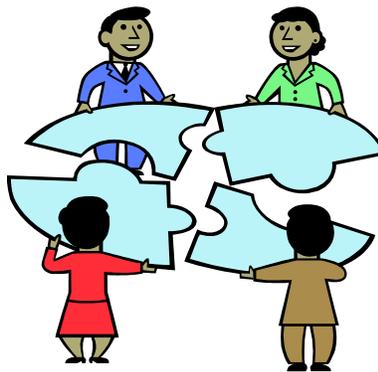
- simply forgets to do the chores and also doesn't like being reminded. Reminders that they write for themselves might take care of this.
- doesn't seriously mind doing the chores, but thinks that doing them is enough and doesn't feel like being cheerful about it.
- is only content when doing activities of their own choice.
- really doesn't like the particular chores assigned to them and might be happier with other choices.

Brainstorm together and discover solutions to this situation which are agreeable to both of you. If necessary, bring this to a bigger family meeting to make sure that what the two of you have decided on is agreeable to everyone who is involved.

In order to get out and stay out of a rut, it is necessary to do things differently. It might help to express appreciation for all the things your teenager does that please you, especially when chores are well done.

You might do your best not to offend with your tones or the content of what you say. As soon as you notice something that is bothering you, make an appointment with the person whose behavior is bothering you to work on this.

Never settle for any solution that does not feel good to all the people involved.



RESPECTFUL MORNINGS WITH KIDS

(The Original “Power of Respect”)

Q: “What do you do when you have three children, ages 2, 4 and 7, and you have to get out of the house in the morning?”

L.H., Redway

A: This is one of the many parenting situations where preparation can be effective. Choose a time when you and your kids are relaxed and not under time pressures.

Tell your kids that you want to have a meeting with them about getting out of the house on time in the morning and you want all of you to feel good. Make sure that the time that you choose for the meeting is also agreeable to all of you. If it is not, do your best to find a time that is.

Your two year old might not fully participate in the meeting. Don’t worry about that. The other kids can participate. I’m sure they will enjoy this.

At the meeting, say that you want to make a plan together that is good for all of you. Bring paper and a pen to the meeting. First, brainstorm. Write down everyone’s suggestions.

Let your kids know that you are writing down all the suggestions because every idea might be important, no matter how silly or strange it seems.

Tell them that during brainstorming no one says anything against any idea. However, make sure that they understand that only the ideas that all of you like can be a part of the plan.

POSSIBLE RESPECTFUL SOLUTIONS:

Maybe one or a combination of the following options would help ease the morning stress:

- The night before, everyone chooses the clothes they are going to wear the next day.
- If someone is not dressed and it’s time to leave, they get dressed in the car.

- If it's time to leave and someone has not finished breakfast, they can take it along and eat in the car, or when they get to where they are going.
- No one plays with toys or the kittens or looks at books or TV until they are ready to leave. Write down exactly what "being ready" means.
- After someone is ready they offer to help the others.
- Everyone gets up 15 minutes earlier.
- You all decide that it doesn't matter if you're late.
- The kids in school get rides with other people.

The key to success is finding solutions that are agreeable to everyone involved. Then no one feels that they are being imposed upon, or taken advantage of. Everyone feels empowered to make it work.

This may not make a lot of sense to your two-year-old, but invite them to participate as much as their interest and ability allows. Explain the group plan to them. Help them participate. Encourage them to choose their clothes the night before, if that is something you all decide to do.

Realize that the plan may not come off smoothly the first, second, or even third time. It's not unusual to have to work the bugs out. Modify the plan until it works for your family.

In case you do have an occasional stressful morning, have a plan to help you stay as calm as possible. Stressing is not going to move things along.

Take some slow, deep breaths, or ground yourself, and center yourself, or put on some music which both soothes you and moves things along. Ask for help from your family, friends, neighbors, seek your inner guidance and you might get just the answer you need at that moment.

Maybe someone can come and help, maybe you can call and let people know that you are running late, but that you are coming. Remember, it may not be the way you like it to be, but it is not the end of the world. Keep the big picture in mind: you are all okay, just a little late.

END SIBLING CONFLICTS

(The Original “Power of Respect”)

Q: “Do you have any special hints for dealing with sibling conflict resolution?”

D.L., Redway

A: Here, as in so many conflict situations, the process of discovering mutually agreeable solutions involves valuable, peace-making skills: making sure that communication is clear, that the people involved understand each other accurately, brainstorming for solutions, and negotiating a win-win resolution to the conflict.

It is helpful if issues are dealt with when the siblings are not engaged in conflict, though these tools can certainly help resolve conflicts while they are happening.

If they are already fighting, and it doesn't really bother you, just ask if anyone wants your help. If they do, they usually begin telling their side of the story immediately.

If you are uncomfortable with their fighting, let them know and offer to help them sort it out so they can both feel good about that's going on. If they don't want your help, you might ask for their help.

Tell them that you have a problem with their fighting; let them know how it makes you feel. Ask them if they would help you find a solution to your problem. After they agree, then you can brainstorm, and negotiate.

Sometimes fighting escalates into physical fighting. If that's not okay with you, then put your body on the line and stay between them until you all come to some mutually acceptable agreement.

If they do want your help, it helps to first talk with each child separately. Then you and they don't have to deal with the dynamics of their relationship while they are sorting things out. It gives each child a chance to be heard, to say what they need and how they would like the situation to be resolved.

Later when they meet together, they won't be so emotional and their ideas will be clearer. If they already know how to find win-win solutions then they can do this on their own. If not, they will need your help as a facilitator until they have become sufficiently skilled.

Often sibling conflicts occur because one of the children does not feel they are being heard, or that their needs are being considered. Another common cause of conflict is misunderstanding. They haven't accurately understood each other. Talking individually with you about the situation gives each one a chance to feel accepted for who they are and what their needs are.

To help this happen, it is important that you do what is called "active listening." Mostly you just listen to what they are saying. Do your best to understand their side of the story, asking questions for clarification if necessary, "So you thought that she wanted you to do that, but now she says that she didn't want you to?"

This makes sure that you have understood them, and helps them be clear in themselves about what happened. It is also a way of teaching the skills of clear communication.

When they feel understood and accepted, it is easier to understand and accept the needs of the other, and to discover mutually agreeable solutions to problems.

As the siblings become more familiar with this method of resolving conflict in ways that are agreeable to everyone involved, not only do they use it spontaneously on their own, but conflicts happen less frequently.

Instead of getting into conflict over something, they go right into negotiating. Also, as they become more skilled negotiators, it takes less time to negotiate. Peace in the home increases.



A DISRESPECTFUL PARENT

(The Original “Power of Respect”)

Q: “I’ve been in your workshops before and I’m getting better at being respectful with my children. My problem is not with them, but with my husband. He is not willing or interested in being a respectful parent. When I see improvement in my son’s self-esteem go down the drain because of something his father says to him, it breaks my heart. Sometimes my husband and I end up fighting about all this. I don’t know what to do. I’m very frustrated.”

V.H., Briceland

A: I know that this kind of situation can be extremely frustrating. It can also be disheartening and very stressful, especially for you. You have a vision of how things can be better and are making efforts to create these changes.

It’s hard to make efforts that seem in vain. But they are not in vain, even if they seem that way right now. Patience and perseverance do make a difference.

It may help you to realize that their father’s behavior might not be so stressful for your kids. Unless they are under three, they are used to his behavior. They may not like it any better than you do, but it is what they are used to.

It does make it more difficult for you to help build self-esteem in your kids, but you can do it. It may take more awareness on your part to when and how they need your help.

Encourage them to exercise as much power over their lives as they are willing, interested, and able to do. Feeling empowered and powerful does a lot for building self-esteem.

Maybe your husband isn’t interested in being a respectful parent, but hopefully he is interested in being respectful with you. Tell him that you want to negotiate with him about approaches to parenting.

Here is a chance to practice all your skills: clear two-way communications, Active Listening, and win-win negotiating. Be sure he knows exactly how you feel, what you need and what behavior is okay with you...and what is not.

Be sure you have the same understanding of him. Coming to agreements may take some time, but it will be worth the efforts. When you practice these techniques with him, it gives him firsthand experience of how it works.

He can better understand the value of win-win solutions when he has gotten personal benefits from them. This can help him accept this approach faster, much faster than when you fight about it.

Fighting is more likely to have the opposite effect, making him even more attached to his parenting methods.

Another way to give him a first-hand positive experience of the power of respect is to offer to help negotiate any conflicts which arise between your husband and your kids. This can also help speed up his acceptance of the respectful approach.

As I have experienced, this can even be effective when both other parties have no faith in finding win-win solutions. He may come to see things getting done faster with less hassle.

Remember patience, perseverance, and forgiveness. If you are determined to introduce this into your family, it can happen.



STAY TOGETHER? OR SPLIT?

(The Original “Power of Respect”)

Q: “I want your opinion. When parents are not getting on well, when one parent is full of anger and not being respectful of the other parent, is it better for the parents to stay together for the sake of the children or to split up for the sake of the children?”

S.C., Briceland

A: I know that this is a much-discussed question today. You can find information on both sides: those who believe that one must stay in the marriage for the sake of the children, no matter what and those who believe that it is worse for the kids to live in an atmosphere of hostility and fighting than to deal with a “broken home.”

It seems clear from what you say that it is not good for things to stay the way they are. If in your heart of hearts you both want to stay together, there are many options for getting the help you both might need to make the necessary changes.

In terms of your kids, it is not good for one parent to be regularly disrespectful to the other. Since the parents are the most powerful and intimate models of appropriate human behavior for their kids, this encourages the development of disrespect and putting up with disrespect as acceptable behavior between males and females.

True, this is the way things used to be in the not too distant past, when women were owned first by their fathers and then by their husbands, but we are no longer their property, and our behavior needs to reflect this.

I think that the best lesson you can offer your kids is how to be true to their inner guidance. Be an example of this for them. Explain what you are doing and how you are doing it.

Don’t act out of what you think their needs are or will be. You can’t know for sure exactly what kinds of experiences they are going to have to deal with in their lives.

However, if they are practiced at following their inner guidance, that part of themselves that directs them to the wisest and most harmonious actions, they have something that never fails them no matter what happens in their lives.

If they want you to, discuss this situation with your kids, since it is going to have an important effect on their lives. They need the opportunity to share their feelings, needs, and wishes, to give their opinions, and participate in the decisions. It is critical that it is safe for them to talk about these things.

It is also a valuable learning opportunity for them. Help them learn the truth of what is going on with their parents and how their parents are dealing with it.

Later when they are faced with difficult life decisions, they will have developed guidelines for thinking things through. They will have practiced this during a time in their lives when the impressions and lessons learned will stick.

These discussions also give them the chance **not** to feel like the victims of something that just happens to them. They are a part of it and kept-up-to-date with the process. They will feel more power in their lives than if it is all decided and then told to them.

This does not mean that the children will be glad about it, if the parents ultimately decide to split up. They might be sad, but they will better understand why it happened, and be more open to focusing on the benefits of the situation rather than just being frustrated and unhappy because something happened that they did not want to happen.

If splitting up is the decision, make sure that your children get to decide where and when they spend their time, as much as possible. If you are all used to working things out with mutually agreeable solutions it gives them more confidence and self-respect. It also makes it easier for them to deal with difficult situations without letting those situations get them down, at least not for very long.

ADULT KIDS

(The Original “Power of Respect”)

Q: “I recently read your book. I regret not knowing about respecting children when I was raising my children. They are all grown now. I wish I could do it over again.”

M.A., Arcata

A: You can, in a way, by creating respectful relationships with your adult kids now. Sure you may not be able to effect their fundamental development. That was finished with the end of childhood.

However, if you change the way you think about them, speak to them, and relate to them, you can transform your present relationship, heal past wounds and create a satisfying, fulfilling relationship with those grownup kids.

It can be a wonderful experience for you both, and fulfill your desire to have raised your kids respectfully.

It may take as much work and transformation on your part as if you had started when they were small. First, you need to become aware of how you treat your kids and what you need to change in order to be respectful toward them at all times. They need this as much as you do, for their own self-esteem. Just as you can change, so can they.

It can help your process and that of your adult kids if you talk about it with them. Depending on your relationship, they may or may not believe you.

In any case, it brings your commitment even more to the forefront of your awareness. This can speed up the process for you and start the process for them.

Even if they don't believe you at first, if you persist, they will be convinced.

In general, all kids, even adult kids who have become estranged from their parents, love their parents and would prefer a mutually respectful relationship with them.

It can help to remember that much of the behavior of parent and child is affected by old stimuli. Many interactions are just playing out previously established behavior patterns.

Your beliefs, which were formed in your past, still guide today's actions. It can take time and persistent effort to reform your belief system to the point where the new beliefs form your experiences.

As you change, new elements are introduced into the patterns. As you change, the changes are reflected in your experiences. As you become more respectful, that respect is reflected back to you from others.

To understand the kind of dedication and determination needed for this change, it can be helpful to think of a baby learning to walk, no matter how many times they fall down, they do not become discouraged and give up. They may take a break, but they return to their practice until they have mastered the ability to walk.

Besides sticking with it, it can also be helpful to practice patience: patience with yourself and patience with others. Remember the power of forgiveness and do what you need to do to keep your self-esteem strong. Notice the changes:

- You and your adult kids have better self-esteem
- Freedom from the strain of always being right
- Freedom from the guilt of hurting your kids
- Satisfaction in discovering win-win solutions to problems
- More energy for adventures, inner ones and outer ones

It is a wonderful, enriching experience to share a relationship with your adult kids full of mutual respect, admiration, love, and trust.

It is never too late to become friends with your kids.

