

# Inquiring Minds topic

**Do we still need manners in today's world?**

**September 15, 2017**

**Moderator- - Eve Aron**

Cave people probably had both customs and manners because groups of people living together need guide lines to be productive and live in harmony. Manners differ with the group culture and change with events happening in that society and the world over time. Our manners today seem to be changing faster than those of previous generations.

Today's world is very different from the one we all grew up in. Computers, cell phones, social media rule in a new technology world. Local thrift shops are loaded with china and collectibles donated by our generation but not wanted by our children or grandchildren. A freer, more casual life shows in today's choice of behavior, clothes and the meals we prepare or purchase. More equality exists between men and women and people of different ethnicity. More children are raised with two working parents. All this affects the manners we have and our use or lack of use of manners.

- 1. What manners did you grow up with that you still feel are important today?  
What manners did you learn that probably can be discarded?  
What manners might not be for today's society of younger people but you wish people still used?**
- 2. How are manners connected to morality, ethical values and respect for others?**
- 4. Suggest some new manners that are needed in today's world, especially with the advent of technology?**
- 6. Should we teach social manners to our children? In a school setting, at home?**
- 7. What manners are needed in a business world, e.g.. dress, interviews, sales?**
- 8. All organizations have a corporate culture which encompasses the values, beliefs, behaviors specific to them. What corporate culture manners exist at Shell Point?**
- 9. Do we use manners when we discuss topics at Inquiring minds?**
- 10. People complain about rudeness in our country. Do we have less manners than other countries or just different ones? Are we still "Ugly Americans"?**
- 11. Is there a way of creating a set of manners for our country? For the international world we all now live in?**

**Have Americans Forgotten Their Manners? ABC News Dec 2, 2017 - Amanda Onion** Edited for brevity

You know the type. The kind who knocks your shoulder with no apology in his rush to his very important meeting. The one who unloads 37 items at the "10 items or less" lane. The harried shopper who barks orders at sales staff as though she's the only customer. People can be rude and it appears rude people are on the rise.

Manner experts and others have observed a marked drop in courtesy. At a post-Thanksgiving sale last week, Florida shoppers trampled a woman and rendered her unconscious in their rush to a Walmart sale, while in Louisiana, video captured a shoving match between shoppers.

One survey commissioned by gift company ORC International Lenox, confirms an increase in such brusque behavior. The survey found more than one-third of 1,000 people polled rate the manners of Americans as poor. That's nearly a 50% jump from 2002 and a 65% drop from results of the same poll in 2001.

Of course, none of these rude people include ourselves – or so we believe. Most Americans rate their own manners as, well, quite excellent. And therein lies the rub, said etiquette instructor Sandra Morisset, a NY professional etiquette trainer states, “Etiquette is not just about what fork to use; it's about your self awareness and treating others with respect. If you're not aware of your behavior, that's a problem.”

Why do we behave the way we do? Ask a dozen people and you'll get answers from hard times to bad parenting to too much technology. All seem to point to a “me” focused society. In a survey with ABC NEWS.com readers, many blame bad behavior on new generations. “Young people believe they are “entitled” to almost anything”.

Others say people have become rude because they are too focused on money: “With the economy the way it is, employment low and greed high, it seems that people forget what life is all about”. Some place the blame on parents. “Many parents teach their children to avoid being bullied by speaking what's on their mind. But unfortunately, they do not teach a polite appropriate way to do so”.

Cynthia Grosso, Charleston School of Protocol and Etiquette, cautions against pointing the finger. “We all find people irritating but the bottom line is, how you treat people is not about how they are, it's about how you are.”

At least one factor does appear to stand out as generally detracting from polite society – one that supposedly made our lives easier- technology. Before cell phone, people couldn't even consider yakking on the phone at the dinner table or at the theater. Last May, an AT&T survey, found 51% of cell phone users said they think other Americans use their cell phone in a “somewhat” or “very” discourteous manner. Grosso calls cell phone “one of the best but rudest inventions of our time

Then there's e-mail. The new language of the digital age may be efficient but it can all too often come across as cold even rude. “We've become very non-communicative”, says Grosso. “We're happy when we can just send an e-mail. But we need to communicate more and, when we do, we need good etiquette.”

### **Are Americans Over Being Polite? Time, nation, 3/18/2012 – Aylin Zafar**

Are Americans become more rude, abandoning traditional polite phrases, or are the words we use now just updated versions of the same sentiment? This debate is the subject of an NPR piece that investigates camps from both sides.

Increasingly, various phrases have been taking precedent over a good old fashioned “thank you” or “you're welcome.” While dining at a restaurant, when a waiter comes by to ask you if you'd like more

water or bread, do you notice that you often say “I’m good,” rather than “no, thank you”? When someone thanks you for holding the door open or doing them a favor, “no problem” is almost on par with “you’re welcome.”

Lisa Gache, Beverly Hills Manners, told NPR: “The slow erosion of these magic words in everyday speech has to do with all things casual in our society today. Casual conversation, dress and behavior have hijacked practically all areas of life, and I do not think it is doing anyone a service.” Apparently Americans agree; a survey by Rasmussen Reports in 2011 revealed that 76% of those surveyed thought Americans were becoming “more rude and less civil.

“But is using phrases like “no problem” or “you bet” or “enjoy” really less civil or even rude? Does more casual phrasing erase the original sentiment of gratitude or is it a way to make the other person feel more comfortable? Doesn’t “no, thank you” sometimes feel a little too formal, perhaps even a little too harsh, beginning with “no”?

NPR spoke to Emily Post Senning, great-granddaughter to Emily Post, who set the standard on manners with her book *Etiquette* in 1922 on this. Senning says that while the principles of respect and consideration are “universal and timeless,” the actual manners change over time and between cultures, as do the words used to articulate gratitude and appreciation. It’s probably not a bad idea to remember to say “please” and “thank you,” but don’t beat yourself up thinking you’re a horrible person if you say “have a good one” instead.

### **Have Manners Changed Too Much Over Generations?- Parent.Co -Sandi Schwartz- 3/21/17 - edited for brevity**

Have you noticed that kids these days do not have the best manners? A 2016 survey by the Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs found that 74% of Americans think manners and behavior have deteriorated in the United States over the past several decades.

Clear differences between what older Americans and younger Americans consider to be rude behavior were revealed in the study. For example, almost half of Americans age 18-29 think it is perfectly acceptable to use cell phones in restaurants, while only 22% of those over age 60 agree. This discrepancy indicates a clear trend in how manners and rudeness have changed over generations.

What is the reason for this change? Experts blame technology and busy parents for this trend. When both parents work long hours and children are raised by other caregivers like nannies, daycare or after school staff, they do not receive the same guidance and skills to help them form good manners. Teachers are not responsible for giving lessons about manners. It is up to parents to instill these within the limited time they have with their children. Many parents feel guilty about all the time they spend at work, so they try to be their children's best friend instead of their disciplinarian.

Technology gets blamed a lot for kids' lack of politeness. Spending so much time on devices pulls kids away from personal interaction with peers and adults which means they are not practicing how to speak to others kindly. When kids communicate through electronics, they have more freedom to be rude since they can be anonymous and removed from the situation.

If it's becoming acceptable that manners no longer matter, why should we care whether our kids have good manners at all? Good manners are still critical to a child's successful growth and their ability to build positive relationships throughout their lives. At the core, good manners reflect respect for our self and others. When we say please and thank you, we are taking the time to make someone else feel appreciated. These skills are necessary throughout school, the workplace and in their relationships.

**Manners and Morals, Villages-News.com July, 2016, Jack Brush -edited for brevity**

One could consider the issue of manners trivial. What difference does it really make if I open the door for my wife? Or if I use the proper fork, or if I wear a ragged sweatshirt when I go to a fine restaurant?

Yes, one could consider the issue of manners trivial, were it not for the underlying relationship between manners and morals. That manners are linked to serious moral issues was in previous generations understood quite well; it is, however, an insight that has slipped once again into forgetfulness. Both manners and morals are to a large extent a matter of accepted convention in society, and where there is no accepted convention about manners, morals become a matter of personal preference. Accordingly, the difference between right and wrong becomes a decision to be made by the individual. If something pleases me and doesn't harm anyone else, then I can consider it to be morally right.

In my new book *Citizens of the Broken Compass*, I argue that there are very few moral standards left in our country. Religious conservatives base their views on the Bible; liberals support their views by

referring to the concept of human rights and tolerance. Neither position is generally accepted in our society, and in the end, we are left with few standards for morals or manners. Just consider the moral values reflected in Hollywood films and pay attention to the behavior of people around you. If someone hurls rude and abusive language at you, is it a case of bad manners or bad morals—or both? Lax morals and bad manners go hand in hand.

**Boston.com Peter Post 3/10/2016** [etiquetteatwork@emilypost.com](mailto:etiquetteatwork@emilypost.com)

In her 1922 best-selling book, *Etiquette*, Emily Post wrote, “Etiquette must, if it is to be of more than trifling use, include ethics as well as manners.”

So, just what is the relationship between ethics and manners or etiquette? Both manners and ethics help us to interact with each other. The key to etiquette is that, be it ethics or manners, it helps us to build stronger and better relationships with all the people in our lives.

At their most fundamental ethics have a moral component. For instance, the person who steals someone’s lunch from the break room is not just committing a violation of manners. They are making a moral decision when absconding with what belongs to someone else, and they are doing it knowingly, intentionally. Similarly, taking a sick day when you really aren’t sick is a moral issue. Lying and cheating are moral issues rather than simply an issue of manners. All these moral choices are intentional actions. The unethical person chooses to act in a way contrary to a moral code; he is aware that the action is an improper one, but he chooses to do it anyway.

Manners don’t have a moral component to them. Instead, manners are guideposts that help us to interact more successfully with those around us. There may be a correct or an incorrect way to handle a given situation, but there is no moral decision involved. In essence, manners tell us what to expect others to do as we interact. Holding a door for another person does not include a moral component. Neither does filling the paper tray in the photocopier when it is empty. The action is done simply because it is the considerate and respectful thing to do for another human being, not because there is any moral choice involved.

Unethical behaviors are more likely to be intentional, whereas a lapse in manners is usually unintentional. For instance, manners tell us not to answer a smartphone while we are talking to a person face-to-face. Yet, people do break with this manner every day. The person answering the phone doesn’t do it to be rude; he does it because he has been programmed, in a previous context, to answer a phone when it is ringing.

Manners and morals both involve the way we choose to act with each other and both underlie the very essence of etiquette. Etiquette is both mannerly and ethical, the daily practice of awareness and intentionality in our actions with others.

## Definitions

The New Oxford American Dictionary 2001

**Manners-** polite or well-bred social behaviors

**Morals** - concerned with the principles of right and wrong behavior and the goodness or badness of human character. Also concerned with adhering to the code of interpersonal behavior that is considered right or acceptable in a particular society

**Custom--** a traditional and widely accepted way of behavior that is specific to a particular society, place or time.

**Ethics-** moral principles that govern a person's or group's behavior

**Standards** – principles of conduct informed by notions of honor and decency

Letitia Baldrige explains the distinction between Etiquette and Manners

*Letitia Baldrige's New Manners for New Times*

*Etiquette is protocol, a set of behavior rules you can memorize like a map, which will guide you safely through life. Manners are much more, since they are an expression from the heart on how to treat others whether you care about them or not.*

*Manners teach you how to value another's self-esteem and to protect that person's feelings. Etiquette consists of firm rules made by others who have come before, telling you to do this and do that on specific occasions.*

*Etiquette means acting with grace and efficiency, very laudable in itself, but your manners are yours, yours to use in making order out of chaos, making people feel comfortable, and giving pleasure to others*

