

## Be The Change

By Denise Ciardello

Has rudeness truly taken over our society? Is 'sticking it to the next guy', the new normal these days? You see it while driving when people don't wait their turn at a stop light, they run the red light, use the turn lane to leap-frog ahead of the people waiting to go straight at a light, tailgating and my all-time pet peeve – going slow in the left lane. When it comes to cell phones, people have totally lost all sense of discretion and I won't even go into the division and hatefulness on TV.

Has this rudeness crept into your office? It seems that I have more people approaching me in offices with issues like:

- I'm the only one that really stays on top of sterilization.  
The hygienists or assistants just drop their instruments and expect someone else to do it.
- Everyone blows out of the office at (closing time) without asking if those still here need help.
- Have you seen our break room? There is old food left out overnight, the microwave is disgusting, the trash doesn't get taken out, it's always a mess.
- (any name in the office) is full of attitude, being rude, won't speak to anyone, rolls her eyes all the time.
- Assistant 1 & Assistant 2 are battling because they differ on their ideas on where the endo cart should be kept
- \_\_\_\_\_ is mad because \_\_\_\_\_ is parking in her spot.

Do any of these sound familiar? I'm sure you could add many more examples to this list. Have we really come so far in our toxic rudeness that we can't have civil conversations about everyone pitching in to stay ahead of the instruments? This is how we survive the day and allow all of our patients to have a pleasant (& safe) experience in our office. And yet it is a proverbial wedge within the decency of communication on a daily basis.



In 1986, Robert Fulghum wrote the book – All I really need to know I learned in Kindergarten. Although the book was used as a punchline many times as people tied their shoes, or used a napkin, the convictions in the book truly did hit close to many people's hearts.

Here are some of the things that he listed as lessons learned at a young age:

- Share everything.
- Play fair.
- Don't hit people.
- Put things back where you found them.
- Clean up your own mess.
- Don't take things that aren't yours.
- Say you're sorry when you hurt somebody.
- Wash your hands before you eat.

Some of these lessons should be tattooed on our eyelids so we don't forget to play fair and clean up our own mess.

In the late seventies, there was a journalist named Judith Martin who became an advice columnist under the pen name – Miss Manners. She enlightened the masses on the sanctity of etiquette and how although people stated they didn't care about it; they would send letters to her stating otherwise. In an interview, she stated: *You can deny all you want that there is etiquette, and a lot of people do in everyday life. But if you behave in a way that offends the people you're trying to deal with, they will stop dealing with you.* I remember reading her column as a child and being amazed at some of the situations that people would write about.

You can go all the way back to Confucian times to find the introduction of the Golden Rule: *Do unto others as you would have them do unto you.* This concept has been included in many religious teachings; however, it was not based on religion yet more toward ethical traditions.

I review these historical occurrences as proof that rudeness is not new – it just might seem more intensified than ever. However, when you think that someone in 500BC felt



the need to come up with the Golden Rule, it illustrates that this is far from simply modern behavior.

It should not, though, put us in the mindset that this is the new normal. Just like Miss Manners, Robert Fulghum and even Confucius, if we are to have a dignified, ethical society, it will have to begin with us. Can you change the whole world to always treat people, right? Not in a million years. What you can do it change your corner of the world by setting the example. A great place to start is:

- ✓ Use 'Please' and 'Thank you' more often than not
- ✓ Wait your Turn
- ✓ When you are wrong... say you're sorry.
- ✓ Listen when someone else is talking
- ✓ Give 3 people in your office a compliment every day
- ✓ Show respect
- ✓ Treat people right... All the time!

The biggest example of treating people right is to avoid gossip in any way, shape or form. If someone will talk to you about someone else, then they will talk about you to someone else. A good rule to live by is one I heard from my daddy: Don't ever lie **to** anyone, **about** anyone or **for** anyone. If you feel harmed by someone, it is your responsibility to go to that person and talk it out; not tell everyone in the office first.

There is a vicious cycle of disrespect in our society and much of its 'spread' is beyond our control. This incivility can be deadly to a team with decreases in productivity and high employee turnover.

Let's make a pact to change our little world and turn our teams around. Let's be the example that people will stare at in wonder because it's not normal. Let's stop the squabbling about who didn't do instruments and thank those that did. Basic rules of courtesy are always acceptable – 'you really helped me by stepping in with that patient' or 'Wow! I was so far behind. Thank you for filing those charts/shredding that stack/taking out the trash.'

This attitude is contagious and I challenge you all to spread it.

Thank you for being the change you want to see in the world.



Thank you for holding the highest standard in the dental world.

Thank you for being loyal GTS supporters.

And Thank you for getting out of the left lane, if I'm behind you.☺