

SOCIAL INCLUSION CORNER

How does a culture of politeness and courtesy foster social inclusion?

1. **Space.** Establishing forms for behavior and clear boundaries of acceptable norms creates the space in which a healthy body can grow.
2. **Time.** Taking a moment to show caring and consideration urges us all to stand against the dehumanizing pressures of time. It builds a place in time for a healthy habit life.
3. **Safety.** When we all follow behavior conventions and rituals we move within an environment which is predictable and safe
4. **Empathy.** Politeness and courtesy take our attention outside our own personal sphere into the realm of the other. This is necessary for the development of empathy and compassion—the higher Self.

SOCIAL INCLUSION CORNER:

Practicing Politeness and Courtesy

How do you answer the telephone at your home? It's possible to have a courteous ritual which the whole family takes up: "Hello, this is the Jones residence. This is Janice speaking." Younger children will feel honored to model themselves after this ever-so-mature behavior. Older children will quickly see the positive responses they receive when they are so charming.

SOCIAL INCLUSION CORNER:

Practicing Politeness and Courtesy

It's possible to bring many forms for courteous behavior to your mealtime ritual. How healthy it is for everyone to wait at the table until each person is seated! How about pulling chairs out for each other? ! In some families each member has an assigned chair for mealtime. How do we decide whose turn it is to speak? We can practice offering others food before we take some for ourselves, or serving each other. It is also a matter of courtesy to remain seated at the table until everyone is finished. What a healthy practice for children who have little experience of waiting for things.

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Why politeness and courtesy?

It's easy to lose sight of why politeness and courtesy are so important in the prevention of bullying and teasing. Children tease and bully for these reasons:

- they lack empathy
- they lack impulse control
- they can't imagine how the other person feels
- their high anxiety level causes them to engage in control-seeking behaviors
- they imitate our culture in which the adults practice put-downs and cynicism

Politeness and courtesy create a predictable form which considers others before ourselves. This models empathy and reduces anxiety in social situations. It also stands against the culture's practice of cynicism and put-downs. And it forces each of us to hold back our impulses (to be first, to have it NOW, to go for what suits ME) while taking the time to honor another person. When the whole community practices courtesy and politeness the incidence of teasing and bullying diminishes radically.

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Reducing Anxiety

A key factor in social conflict is anxiety. Our anxiety level determines whether we are able to meet a social challenge with warmth and equanimity or with an angry counter attack. Whenever we find reduce anxiety we make enormous strides toward a healthy social climate.

When we practice an attitude of gratitude our own anxiety level will decrease. Take a few quiet moments each day to ask yourself this question: "What is there that I can be grateful for?" Though at first it might feel as if you're simply going through the motions, in time you will notice a warm feeling of gratitude welling up in your soul. Because it's contagious, all around you will eventually catch it!