

“Can Society Function Without Respect?”

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Pure chaos - imagine a world where people were so consumed with themselves that somewhere along the way, they lost the ability to respect their peers. It would be utter chaos.

The idea that some people's views don't have as much value as another person's is repulsive. It is this rudimentary mindset that drives wedges into friendships, pits co-workers against each other, and rips families apart. These associations are the glue of society. Respect is the key to coexisting and will prevent calamity. People have forgotten that they don't have to agree on every single matter, but it's crucial that they at least tolerate the ideas of their neighbor.

At a very young age, I learned that everyone is human and deserves to be treated as such. People may have different religions, political views, or other ideas on how to live, but they have the right to be treated with respect. My parents taught me this on a small scale: always respect my siblings, family, teachers, and elders. As I grew older, my appreciation for respect naturally progressed. It became clear to me that people don't have to agree with each other, but they don't have to force their views on their peers. I grew up thinking that everybody else had this same mindset.

It wasn't until I was in high school that I realized that not everyone shared my ideas on respect. At first I was appalled, but then I learned that you have to accept others' lack of respect. For me, this is one of the most difficult times to be understanding. I can remember a specific incident when I was having a discussion about religion with classmates. Students had different views on the topic and the conversation was, in my opinion, very constructive. Nobody had said anything about Christianity and being a Christian, I talked briefly about my beliefs. Another student in class told me that Christianity was a waste of time and invalid. I was very hurt and offended. I don't think this individual was intending to personally attack me; he was just speaking his mind. What the student didn't realize was, that with his words, he spit on everything I believed in. It's not wrong to speak your mind, just do it in a way that isn't degrading to others.

If everyone were to act like the student who disrespected me, society could never be productive; in order to succeed, people need to take others' ideas into consideration and work together.

A problem in today's culture is that one doesn't have to be face to face when having a conversation. While sometimes this is a helpful tool, it can give people the idea that it's okay to say whatever they want about whomever they want, which leads to destruction and activates chaos in society. Social media format Facebook is a prime example of this scenario.

Everybody probably has at least one Facebook friend who nonstop posts their opinions about politics. They seem to not only state their opinion, but simultaneously slam the other side of the argument and everyone who supports it. When has someone changed their deep rooted opinions based on a cruel post? That's right: never. This kind of dialogue is extremely degrading and pits people against one another. Human beings need to be able to respect each other so they can live in unity without hate.

It is perfectly acceptable for someone to express their opinions. In fact, it's actually necessary in many circumstances. One of my closest friends and I do not share the same political views. During the 2016 presidential election, we both openly talked about why we supported one candidate and didn't support the other. Even though we didn't agree on such a big topic, we were able to have a beneficial conversation; we valued each other and had open minds. The secret is to treat one another with human decency.

The fact of the matter is: it is impossible for society to survive without respect. When people are treated as less than human due to a lack of respect, society as a unit fails. Jackie Robinson, the first black Major League Baseball player, once said, "I'm not concerned with your liking or disliking me. All I ask is that you respect me as a human being."¹ Chaos will thrive if respect isn't utilized frequently in culture. It's tolerable to dislike someone, but it is unacceptable to disrespect someone.

¹ Source: Grand Slams and Fumbles (Peter Bellenson)