

THE AUGMENTER

Webster's Definition:
augment (verb)—to
make or become greater
augmenter (noun)

Newsletter for Families of St. Augustine Religious Education in Larchmont, NY

Our entire task in this life consists in healing the eyes of the heart so that they may be able to see God. — St. Augustine

Raising Respectful Children in a Disrespectful World

Rude behavior, back talk, whining, foul language, and a lack of manners all show how commonplace disrespect has become in today's society. With so many poor role models around them, it's easy for your children to sink to that same level. But when you teach them respect, you teach them to value themselves and others – and that will make them blessings to the world.

Build self-respect instead of self-esteem. Realize that seeking to build your kids' self-esteem will teach them to focus on themselves, how they feel, and what they want. Make it your goal to help them build self-control and self-discipline, which will lead to self-respect and place their focus on how others feel and what others need. Teach your kids to serve others rather than expecting to be served. Encourage them to contribute to the world rather than expect the world to give to them.

Be the person you want your kids to become. Command your children's respect by modeling what it looks like to be a respectful person. Ask God to help you live with integrity in all areas of your life, and to guide your speech and behavior. Know that when your children respect you, they can more easily respect God, others, and themselves.

Focus on character. Don't be a parent-centered parent (focusing on your own desires above what's best for your children) or a child-centered parent (focusing on your children's desires so much that you overindulge them). Instead, be a character-centered parent, focusing on producing strong character in your kids. Make decisions with your goal in mind. Rely on wisdom from the Bible, which is timeless, instead of the latest trend from pop psychology. Keep the promises you make to your kids. Keep your priorities in the right order: God, spouse (if you have one), children, others, and self.

Use age-appropriate approaches. Help kids ages *birth to 2 years* old build trust by establishing routines for them, setting a consistent schedule, and showing them that you're in charge. Help kids ages *3 to 5 years* old build a sense of security by offering them recognition, paying attention to them, and showing them that they belong in your family. Help kids ages *6 to 12* develop the ability to obey by building a close relationship with them, listening well to them, and being authentic. Help kids ages *13 to 19* to develop self-respect by giving them responsibility, enabling them to discover more about themselves, and transferring accountability to them.

Emphasize purpose rather than performance. Examine your motives for trying to help your kids succeed. Ask yourself: "Do I want my child to be Number One? Or do I want my child to be the best he or she can be?" Don't focus on what you want your child to do. Instead, consider who you want your child to become. Realize that character qualities like perseverance, honesty, and responsibility are much more important than academic knowledge or skills from extra-curricular activities. Ask God to help you inspire your kids out of a heart of love instead of pushing them out of a heart of selfish ambition. Help your children uncover their strengths and weaknesses by giving them plenty of opportunities to try out different activities, then looking for patterns to emerge. Ask: "What kinds of things is each child interested in?," "In what areas does each excel?" and "What things give each child joy?" Expose them to nature, good literature, museums, art, history, and other pursuits that can expand their horizons. Don't push your kids to be perfect, realizing that they never can be. Instead, simply encourage them to do the best they can. Accept your children for who they are, and don't compare them with each other or classmates. Give your kids enough downtime for unstructured play on a regular basis, since they need that time to develop their creativity. Encourage them to build a close relationship with God through frequent prayer.

Be a coach, not a cheerleader. Instead of offering your kids false praise and applauding mediocrity in their lives, offer them genuine praise that's merited and expect excellence from them. Don't neglect giving them the instruction they need. Motivate them through encouragement, rather than bribery or some other external means. Strive to inspire them by being a good role model in their lives. Don't make excuses for your kids; let them know you believe they can do better when they fail to do their best. Dream big with your children and encourage them to hold onto hope for those dreams to come true.

Set boundaries without building walls. Establish boundaries that help your children, but don't create walls between you and them. Work with your spouse to present a united front to your kids. Choose some key issues that won't be open for discussion, and stick to your word on them, no matter what. Stay emotionally connected to your kids, making sure they know you love them for who they are rather than what they do. Don't give into the myth that small amounts of "quality time" will lead to a close relationship; know that you must have large quantities of time into your relationship with your kids if you want to be close to them. Make rules appropriate to your children's ages.

Use discipline rather than punishment. Recognize the crucial difference between discipline and punishment. Understand that discipline is meant to teach your kids important life lessons and motivate them, whereas punishment seeks to force control through shame, discouragement, and fear. Know that discipline encourages respect and leads to self-discipline, while punishment encourages resentment and leads to rebellion. Let your kids know that you love them unconditionally, but will not hesitate to follow through with appropriate consequences to reinforce lessons you're teaching them. Remember that you're not fighting your children; you're battling the wrongness of their behavior. Be consistent and calm when following through, fit the discipline to the crime, ask your children to forgive you when you make mistakes, and continue to expect the best of your kids.

Shield your kids from hurtful content in popular culture. Carefully monitor the magazines, books, music, movies, TV shows, video games, and Internet sites your children experience to protect them from disrespectful images and messages that can harm them. Only allow content that reflects your values. Watch, read, and listen to the media your kids do so you can discuss it together. Expose your children to thoughtful and inspiring culture, such as great literature and art. Be sure to practice what you preach by refraining from engaging in disrespectful media yourself.



Editor's Note:
The article says it better
than I ever could.

Sister Suzanne Duzen, SS.C.M.,
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Engage your kids instead of entertaining them. Don't just entertain your children with mindless amusements; engage their imaginations with thought-provoking activities. Periodically unplug your telephone, TV, computer, and all other electrical devices that can distract you from spending focused time together as a family. Then use that time to have some old-fashioned fun together, such as by sharing stories, singing songs, playing games, and putting jigsaw puzzles together. Give your kids plenty of opportunities for creative play. Encourage them to carry books with them at all times so they can spend their downtime reading. Set aside a special place at home for reading and schedule time regularly for the whole family to read. Give your kids your undivided attention as often as you can, and engage them in meaningful conversations.

Teach gratefulness rather than greediness. Understand that if you grant your kids' every whim, they'll keep wanting more and more, miss out on life's simple pleasures, and never develop grateful hearts. Don't substitute material gifts for what your children actually need – your presence and time with them. Guard against giving them too much and expecting too little of them. Train them in manners and money management. Regularly serve other people together as a family, so service will become a way of life for your kids. Help them learn to be content. Don't allow whining or idleness. Assign your children chores on a regular basis to contribute to your household, hold them accountable for their responsibilities, and thank them for jobs they do well. Encourage them to work to help pay for extras they want, and teach them that good things come to those who wait. Ask them to give a portion of their own money to church or charity regularly.

Listen well. Give your kids the invaluable gift of listening carefully to what they say. Whenever they share their thoughts and feelings with you, pay close attention and seek to genuinely understand them. Break free of distractions, make eye contact, and ask for clarification when you need it. Know that if you listen to your kids, they'll be inspired to listen to you and grow to become respectful people.

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www.howardpublishing.com.

Jill Rigby is an accomplished speaker, columnist, television personality, family advocate, and founder of Manners of the Heart Community Fund, a nonprofit organization. Jill's definition of manners remains the same – an attitude of the heart that is self-giving, not self-serving. She is the proud mother of twin sons who testify to her contagious passion.