

DECEMBER 2015

DEAR DR. ROBYN

DIGNITY



Young students: We all deserve to be treated like we matter!

Older students/teens/adults: Treating ourselves and others like we are all worthy of care and attention.

Dear Dr. Robyn,

Did you see it? There was a video of a worker at a fast food restaurant who told a homeless man that he'd give him a hamburger and then threw water in that man's face instead...How can we talk to our children about how to treat others even when they are different or have less?

-- Joanie P, Los Angeles, CA

Dear Joanie,

Yes, I did see that video and I was horrified along side many others who also watched it. How could there be such a violation of dignity to someone who was already in such a vulnerable position? We must treat ALL citizens as though they matter if we are to create a culture grounded in dignity, strength and kindness.

Here are some ways to talk to children and teens about dignity:

(1) Use current events: When videos (such as the one you mentioned) or stories come out into the mainstream, discuss them! For instance, ask your children, "what do you think of this employee's behavior?" and "how do you think that made the man who was homeless feel about himself?" Children and teens can learn a great deal about right and wrong if we use media and current events as teaching tools.

(2) Travel mentally or physically: Show your children the many different kinds of people there are in this world. You can physically travel or mentally travel through books, the web, and connecting with pen pals. Talk about similarities and our differences. Discuss that each person has worth no matter how much or how little they own.

(3) Be outward about meaningful gratitude: Tell people how much they matter to you and model this for your children. Encourage your children to express their gratitude and their admiration for others. Too often we highlight competition in our society rather than cooperation and gratitude.

(4) Discuss put-downs and bullying: Bullying and social aggression can strip someone of their dignity and shame them for not being "enough" or being too different. Talk about the link

**POWERFUL
WORDS**
CHARACTER DEVELOPMENT

<< Paraphrased from a message; with permission

between bullying and dignity and ask your children for ways that we can lift ourselves up without putting others down.

(5) Encourage dignity of self: Talk to your children about refraining from putting themselves down, shaming or making themselves seem inferior. Make sure they know that they are valuable and that you are too!

Here's to your success!

