



A Personal Note from Single Steps Strategies Founder Mary Grace Musuneggi

I "Miss" Manners

Although I was raised by a single parent, who barely ever made more than minimum wage; she managed to pay all the bills, keep food on the table, and teach us the life skills that she felt were important for us to live with class and grace. She had the uncanny ability to understand and educate us on the ways of the world, even though, because of her means, her real world was very small. She felt that good manners were a necessity in order to reach our goals, feel comfortable in the right circles and grow beyond our circumstances.

On occasion she would read to us from a column in our local newspaper, called "Miss Manners". People would write to Miss Manners with questions regarding etiquette. She would respond with lessons on acceptable and appropriate behavior.

This came to mind recently, when my friend and I had dinner at a local upscale restaurant. Years ago eating at a restaurant like this would have meant that the clientele would have dressed up and would be using their very best manners. Not so, today.

That evening, with a quick look around the dining room, I saw a young girl with her elbows on the table; a man talking on his cell phone; a preteen yelling at his mom "give me some bread"; a middle-aged woman standing, reaching across the table and stabbing a pat of butter with a knife; a fairly well-dressed gentleman chewing with his mouth open while his napkin, that should have been in his lap, was on the table; a twenty-something couple having an argument that should have been left at home; an attractive young woman standing at the bar drinking beer out of a bottle; another woman brushing her hair while picking up food with her fingers; and various people holding their silverware as though it were a weapon instead of a utensil.

Today when I come in contact with a young person with exceptional manners, I am in awe; as it seems to be the exception instead of the rule. I have a niece with a houseful of young daughters, and although they are well versed in the ways to behave in public, their mother reminds me that with kids today you have to "pick your battles". If her girls forget to put their napkin in their laps, or say "please and thank you" she does correct them; but in a world of drugs, teenage pregnancy, school shootings, and so on; these things may seem so trivial. Perhaps that is why the rules of etiquette have been lost.

But I miss manners; even if they are "passé" or "old fashioned". Because I know the joy of what good manners can mean; as that same night at the restaurant I so appreciated my friend as he held my chair when I sat down; helped me with my coat; opened the car door for me; said "please" to the coat check woman; and "thank you" to the valet; stopped to personally tip the wait staff; said "excuse me" to a man he walked in front of as we came in the door. His elbows never rested on the table, he held his silverware with style; and he left his cell phone in the car, so that his conversation with me was not interrupted. All this was done without a second thought. All of this was done with ease and grace.

Some may say that this is all a cliché so "passé" and so "old fashioned". Maybe they are right. But I think with manners comes respect. Respect for yourself and respect for those you are with.

Some may say that it certainly is not the answer to all the problems in the world; and I agree. But a little class, a little style; a little dose of "Miss Manners" could make some small piece of the world a whole lot nicer.

Mary Grace Musuneggi

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'M. Musuneggi', written in a cursive style.

Executive Director of Single Steps Strategies

Single Steps Strategies is a Life Planning organization providing information education women

Sponsored by The Musuneggi Financial Group, LLC

Visit us at www.mfgplanners.com and www.singlestepsstrategies.com

July 2010