

## Preserving Your Self-Respect

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What will you go through great length to preserve? This is an interesting and important question that many people rarely ask themselves. However, this is a question that most of us deal with in our lives—more often than we realize! Take a moment and ask yourself this question. Keep in mind that the key word in this question is “preserve,” and not to be confused with the word “protect.”

Asked this question, many people—perhaps you—will offer any of the following responses, and more. I will go through great length to preserve:

- ◆ the well-being of my children
- ◆ the comfortable environment of my home
- ◆ the financial savings for my child’s college education
- ◆ my regained good health
- ◆ my right to free speech

Some people—I am certain—will also go through great length to preserve:

- ◆ access to free beer!
- ◆ access to free food!
- ◆ the duration of a great late-night party

Here is another important question to ponder — how far will you go to preserve your self-respect? Every person, without exception, has some degree of self-respect. Some of us have more of it than others. This is possible because respect is a relative concept and not an absolute one. Moreover, self-respect is a unique category of respect—one that each mature adult absolutely controls. I discussed the topic of self-respect quite a bit in *The Top Ten Laws of Respect* book series.

In very simple terms, self-respect is a measure of the inherent worth (dignity) and relative valuation that one places on oneself. But how do you know how much inherent worth you embody? How do

you know how much value to place on yourself? And I am not referring to your financial worth or material possession. The answer depends on how well you know yourself and what you represent, as well as how much you appreciate various aspects of yourself.

Whether we realize it or not, we are faced with many situations in life that challenge our sense of self-respect. And, consciously or often subconsciously we engage in action that either preserves our self-respect or diminishes it. Whenever we diminish our self-respect, the outcome sometimes undermines our ability to command respect effectively in the future. This is analogous to damage sustained to the foundation of a building. Even though the damage may not bring down the whole structure, it will certainly weaken the

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foundation. Every subsequent damage (to the foundation) will become cumulative and this continuous cycle will ultimately undermine the integrity of the building itself. Self-respect is the cornerstone of the foundation for respect.

There are many situations in life that challenge our sense of self-respect. Many of these are quite common and relatively mild, while others are more extreme. The following represent ten such life challenges.

1. You are faced with a choice of how to dress for an event that you are planning to attend. Your friends are encouraging you to dress in a manner that you are not comfortable with.
2. You are engaged in a passionate group discussion with friends and new acquaintances, and you find yourself driven to match the use of colorful (and foul) language, much like a few other people around you have elected to do.
3. You are engaged in a heated argument with your significant other and you are tempted to recall historical events that you know will be hurtful and that will bring back painful memories.
4. You have a disagreement with one of your parents regarding a personal issue that is upsetting to you, and you are prepared to tell your (mother/father) off.
5. You are debating whether to invite a new friend to a family barbeque against the wishes of the rest of your family who do not approve of this individual.
6. Having made a firm commitment to your family to stop drinking (in the aftermath of an alcohol treatment program), you are faced with an opportunity to join your friends on a weekend getaway—that is sure to be laden with alcohol parties.
7. You have finally saved an appreciable sum of money and are debating whether to repay a debt to a friend (who has been waiting patiently) or make a spontaneous purchase for a new gadget that has caught your eye.
8. You have the final authority to make a critical hiring decision among three finalists, one of whom is a close friend, but with the least credentials.
9. You are the victim of bullying—by your boss—and a recent event has prompted a new confrontation between the two of you. He is in the wrong and he knows it.
10. You have been physically abused and battered, yet again, by your abusive husband and you are considering whether to leave once and for all and seek help.

These situations and many more like them present personal challenges that constantly test your will, your character, and your value system. With each test, your self-respect is either preserved (and enhanced) or eroded. Knowing this, how far will you go to preserve your self-respect?

## About the Author



Niyi Taiwo is the founder of EKTIMIS and the lead editor for the EKTIMIS eLibrary articles. He is the author of several books, including the EKTIMIS Top Ten Laws series. He is a continuous improvement expert with over 21 years of industry experience – operational, management and consulting. He has been studying the topic of respect since 2004. He holds an undergraduate degree from WPI and a master's degree from RPI. He is a certified Lean Expert and an ASQ-certified Six Sigma Black Belt.