

Respect and the Communication Factor

Category Family Series **Date** November 23, 2009

Peter was preparing to leave his home for the airport. Today was the arrival of George, his son's friend visiting from London, England. Jon had arranged to have his father pick up George at the airport to allow him (Jon) ample time to return from a short trip out of town. Jon and George had met and became friends while Jon was serving as an exchange student in England during the previous year. Their friendship now afforded George an opportunity to travel out of his home country—England—for the first time. The two young friends looked forward to their summer break together. Peter and his wife also looked forward to hosting their son's friend from abroad.

Peter decided to go online—the Internet—to check the arrival status of George's flight prior to leaving home for the airport. However, he was soon faced with a dilemma when he realized that there were two flights scheduled to arrive from London for the day—the first around noon time and the second late in the evening. Peter did not know which flight George would be on. Jon had failed to provide him with a flight number and had simply stated that George would arrive on a specific airline, on a specific date.

And so, Peter quickly called his son on his mobile telephone, but was transferred to his voice mail instead. "Now what do I do — leave for the airport now and hope he is on the early flight, or prepare to hang out at the airport for the rest of the day?" Peter asked his wife.

Clearly the above story illustrates a situation that we have all experienced numerous times in our lives — a breakdown in communication. And the basic observation from this scenario, and others like it, is the fact that communication is most often a bridge—a connector—between knowledge and proper execution.

This article, a continuation (and third) in the *Respect-Factor* article series, brings emphasis to the importance of communication when it comes to respect in a home. As the leaders of a household, parents possess the most knowledge on the topic of respect; whereas children lack the knowledge on this topic (respect) due to their immaturity and their lack of adequate life experiences. The responsibility, therefore, lies in the hands of parents to transfer this knowledge—through effective communication—to their children starting at an early age.

In a home environment, communication between parent and child occurs in two primary forms—observation and interaction. On the topic of respect, both of these forms of communication require time (refer to the EKTIMIS article, *Respect and the Time Factor*). Unfortunately, with the ever increasing pressures on parents today, a lot less time is committed to ample quality interaction with children.

During my research for my newest book, *The Top Ten Laws of Respect at Home – A Family Guide*, due out later this year, I learnt that many parents are aware, but do not pay much attention to the level of impact that their behavior and action at home have on their children. Most parents know that children observe many things that they (the parents) do; however, many parents underestimate the power and impact of these observations (by their

children) over time. Children simply watch, observing what their parents say (and how they say it) and observing what they do (and how they do it). And their minds become programmed gradually.

The [fourth law of respect](#) states that *"The way you present yourself, the words you utter, and the actions you engage or display are prerequisite factors to earning respect."* And so, much of the way that children present themselves, the words they sometimes use, and the actions they often engage are learnt through years of observing their parents in and outside the home. The consequences sometimes lead to disrespect (toward the children) at a later time, or worse, poor self-respect by the children.

Unlike observation, interaction (between parent and child) is more direct and can be quite intimate. Studies have also shown that parents who spend more quality time with their children, engaged in joint interactive activities, exercise more influence over their children. This naturally implies that they make (and leave) more of an impression on their children—especially at an early age.

Whether it is a family tradition of having dinner together, playing an interactive game as a family, going for a father-son or mother-daughter walk in the park, going out grocery shopping as a parent-child duo, working on a home project as a team, reading a good book together, participating in a benevolent community event as a family, or a host of many other interactive activities, such times create opportunities for parents to cultivate the seeds and communicate the lessons of respect. The payoff is gradual and definitely long lasting.

As a parent, what are you communicating to your children? Are you aware of what they are learning through observation at home? Are you engaging them

interactively and often enough? Whether it is through observation or interaction, communication becomes the bridge between the knowledge needed (by your child) to cultivate an attitude of respect and the ability (of your child) to act with respect. This bridge is best built by you, the parent, (at home) and not by ill-advised persons or other detrimental societal forces that stand ready to engage.

Respect and the Communication Factor

Communication is the bridge between the knowledge needed to cultivate an attitude of respect and the ability to act with 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.