

Practice kindness and patience

*It's a New Year,
a time when
people make
resolutions to
stop smoking,
start exercising,
lose that extra
10 pounds and
stay in touch
with friends.*

These are positive behavioral changes, but how many of us think about changing our attitudes? How many of us say, "I'm going to be kinder this year," or "I will be more patient with my family, employees and co-workers?" At some point, rude treatment of others seems to have become the norm in our society.

"I'm having a bad day" has become an excuse for poor behavior at any age. Road rage, routine inconsiderate treatment, foul language, intimidation, verbal abuse, school shootings and "going postal" are what our children and grandchildren are experiencing as normal behavior. Let's just sit with that thought for a moment.



About a year ago, I was in my car outside a convenience store waiting for a friend. There were four young boys on bikes (all around 10 years of age) and all within my hearing range. The foul language being exchanged by those children was astounding. After several minutes of being subjected to this vulgarity, I asked them politely to please clean up their language. Their response should be of no surprise to you. One flipped me off, as the others matched the action

with words. I'm sure some of you have had a similar experience.

What are we missing here?

Aretha Franklin has been singing about it for years, and Dr. Phil discusses it constantly — Respect. Being respectful is basic and can start with a smile and eye contact. When you look someone in the eye and smile, you are telling them you respect them as a fellow human being. But respect must begin within, and here lies my point. We have the ability to make changes in people around us, by first making changes in ourselves.

Simple, you say? Not so fast. Try it for one entire day. Work on being respectful to your children when you're trying

to get them up and ready for school in the morning and they're not cooperating. Work on being respectful while you're driving to work and someone unexpectedly cuts you off. Try smiling and being respectful when a co-worker, customer, client or employer is being rude and obnoxious. It's not easy, and transformation won't happen overnight, but like any other New Year's resolution, practice makes perfect.

Anne Frank said, "Then, without realizing it, you try to improve yourself at the start of each new day; of course, you achieve quite a lot in the course of time. Anyone can do this; it costs nothing and is certainly very helpful."

Is it too idealistic to

believe that today, for just one day, we could make an effort to practice patience and respect with everyone we meet? One day could turn into two, and two days could turn into a week, and on and on. In a matter of weeks we've not only developed a new habit, but we've probably lowered our blood pressure a few points in the process; not to mention what we're teaching the young people around us.

Give it a try. What have you got to lose?

Happy New Year to everyone — and let's vow to make 2008 count as time well spent!

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