

Lindon

# CHARACTER

Connection



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Courtesy

October 2013

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*Courtesy is a man's privilege, not an obligation."*

*-Anonymous*

While visiting a foreign country my Dad had the following experience. Each morning as he left his hotel to walk to his place of business he encountered a huge pile of dirt on the sidewalk. It was so big that he had to walk into a crowded and dangerous street to go around it. After several days of this, he finally inquired as to why it was there. He found out that it had been sitting there for 3 years and no one knew why it was put there in the first place! Furthermore, nobody had moved it because no one thought it was their responsibility!

Abraham Lincoln said, "Die when I may, I want it said of me, by those who know me best, that I always plucked a thistle and planted a flower when I thought a flower would grow."

I love the idea that the pile of dirt could represent a lack of courtesy, incivility or just plain meanness. Likewise, planting a flower is a great metaphor for courtesy and kindness.

To witness a lack of courtesy in our society all we have to do is get in our car, go to a retail establishment or restaurant, visit an airport or walk down the street. And don't even get me started about cell phones!

In a recent essay titled "Common Courtesy", the author stated the following:

"On a normal day I encounter at least 100 people. These people do not have to be people that I talk to, just merely someone that I look directly in the eye. Of these one hundred individuals, only 20% looked at me and smiled and said hi."

I suspect that many of us encounter a similar number of people on a daily basis. Do we leave a "pile of dirt" behind us after these encounters or do we "plant a flower?"

May I suggest that it is not difficult to "plant a flower" in our daily encounters with others. The simple act of smiling can be very powerful.

We tell our children that, "Please and Thank You are the magic words", yet these "magical" words have almost disappeared from the American vocabulary.

I can't think of too many people who get "piles of dirt" as often as those who work in the service industries: retail, airline, restaurant and cleaning services to name a few. So many times while people use these services, they abuse those who provide them.

How many times have we witnessed the poor clerk or waitress being yelled at for something they have no control over?

As a teenager I worked at a large department store. One day a man came in with a problem with some of our merchandise. He was obviously frustrated and took it out on me! He wasn't just rude, he got personal. I was crushed. When he finally left, the customer who had been standing behind him said, "I am so sorry he treated you that way, you certainly didn't deserve it!" In essence, he planted a flower in someone else's pile of dirt!

The recent tragedy along the Gulf Coast has really brought out the best and the worst in people. A striking scenario that was played out over and over again, was that after basic needs like food, water and sanitation were met, people just needed to be hugged and to know that someone cared.

Most of us in our community have the basic needs of life. I think we could agree that all of us want to be liked, respected and treated courteously. It all boils down to the Golden Rule: "Don't leave a pile of dirt, because you probably wouldn't like to get one." Or in other words, "Do unto others as you would have them do unto you."

Let's make Lindon "A Little Bit of Country" with a whole lot of Courtesy.

*Jennifer Kleinman, Lindon Resident*

Nothing is ever lost by courtesy. It is the cheapest of the pleasures; costs nothing and conveys much. It pleases him who gives and him who receives; and thus, like mercy, it is twice blessed."

—Erastus Wiman

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## Book List



"What Do You Say, Dear?"

by Maurice Sendak

"What Do You Do, Dear? Proper Conduct for all Occasions"

by Sesyle Joslin

"Mind Your Manners!"

by Peggy Parish

"You Know Better Than That!"

by Smaridge, Norah,  
Nashville, Abington  
Press, 1973

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## Family Activities

—One of the most productive inventors, George Westinghouse was born on October 6, 1846. His inventions included the railroad train airbrake, alternating current electrical power transmission, and the gas meter. He organized over 50 companies. He initiated a half-day off on Saturday for his employees, pension fund for workers, and paid vacations. It is said that his "religion was simple: The Golden Rule."

What relationship does courtesy have to the Golden Rule?

—Discuss "magic" words like "thank you," "Please" and "excuse me." Whenever someone uses one, act like you're under their spell and quickly compliment and grant all polite requests, as long as they're reasonable.

—Have a dress-up party. Serve punch and cookies. Ask children to invite their favorite stuffed animals. Then, try to outdo each other's politeness.

—Teach children to say (and write), "Thank you" even for gifts they don't love. Pretend to give them unusual presents, then ask them to practice saying, "Thank you."

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## Kid's Corner

ROLE PLAYING:

\*\*Henry is riding the city bus with his mother. He is glad that he is in the first seat, because all of the seats are filled and the bus is feeling very crowded. The bus stops again and a grandmother holding a child's hand gets on the bus. What should Henry do?

\*\*Her mother has just introduced Joyce to a friend from work. What should Joyce do and say? How does Joyce address the adult friend?

\*\*Edgar is late for school, but arrives as the flag is being put on the flagpole. Two boys are saluting. Edgar will miss the quiz if he is late. Talk about flag etiquette. What should Edgar do?

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Lindon Character Connection is a group of parents, teachers, business and religious leaders who met over 20 years ago to formulate an education curriculum which would teach shared community values to the Lindon Elementary School children. Our goal was to "connect" the home and family, the teachers and schools and the business and religious communities in teaching and using these shared values. Thousands of hours have been donated to this cause by the many parents, teachers and community leaders who have supported the teaching of values to the children of Lindon. The Lindon Character Connection has been, is and always will be dedicated to teaching and developing shared values in the community, and its belief that the heart of a strong community is the home. With the support of our schools, and community we see a bright future for our citizens and especially our children!

[www.lindoncharacterconnection.com](http://www.lindoncharacterconnection.com)

*Lindon Character Connection Board:*

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*Lindon Character Connection is a not-for-profit organization encouraging the enhancement of character development in our community. We are accepting volunteer or financial support. If you can help please send contributions to:*

*Lindon Character Connection c/o Lindon City  
100 North State St., Lindon, Utah 84042-1808 (*

*You may also give your donation to any executive board member.)*

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