



*kate's corner*

*kate gilderdale*

# 'Me' generation didn't taint kids

Are today's youth really lacking manners and consideration for others, or is it just the same old problem of the generation gap rearing its ugly head?

After all, times have changed. The stiff formality of earlier years, with its strict dress codes and "children should be seen and not heard" philosophy has been relegated to the history books. Young people are encouraged to voice their opinions and feelings and to challenge the status quo.

Youthful rebellion, always a normal part of growing up, inevitably creates tension between older and younger generations. Kids will naturally reject their parents' values and attitudes; however a lot of what they observe in our behavior will have an unconscious effect on theirs, and the evidence is especially clear in our overwhelming worship of materialism.

It doesn't take a child long to discover that, far too often, people are judged primarily on their possessions. With adults vying for the flashiest car, the biggest house and the most expensive designer label, it's hardly surprising their children attach so much importance to ownership.

If adults can't spare valuable time to practise courtesy and thoughtfulness because they're too busy trying to win at the pointless game of having it all, they're pretty unrealistic to expect their own children to be kind, caring and polite. Kids quickly learn from adults that confrontation, not negotiation, is the way to get what they want.

The 'me' generation still wants it all, and it's not about to ask nicely if its demands are not met. If there's a problem with your child's teacher, soccer coach or dance instructor, you must insist that things are done your way and don't take no, or even maybe, for an answer. Mutual respect and a reasonable attitude are strictly for wimps.

Perhaps the most amazing thing is not how badly, but how well, the majority of kids turn out. We could learn something about compassion and consideration from them. Of course they're noisier and more outspoken than we used to be, but they often show a surprising amount of sensitivity and caring, which is all too often missing in the selfish adult world.

They care about the world they live in and about trying to salvage something from the mess previous generations have made of it. They may believe they have all the answers, but they're still kids and they still need to know what their limits are.

When our home and school group worked with students in Grades 4 to 8 to put on a variety show, we were amazed at the students' enthusiasm, cooperation and willingness to learn. They happily gave up recess periods and after-school time to perfect their acts, and they responded with enthusiasm to ideas from both adults and fellow students.

Children and adults have a lot to learn from each other; with mutual respect and understanding, we may even find we enjoy the experience.

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