

RESPECT

What is Respect?

Respect is represented by deference (respectful acceptance, submission and/or yielding to the judgement and/or opinion of others) and courtesy in all interactions.

Why is it important to be respectful?

Respect as a concept, is one of the most frequently chosen values to appear on a corporate mission statement or values charter, and yet an area often criticised for not being honoured.

Generally it seems to be agreed that respect has great importance in everyday life and that we're taught from a very young age to respect parents, teachers, elders, rules and laws, traditions, other people's feelings, beliefs, opinions and so on.

We're often told that we "should" be respectful and at some point in our developing years we "accept" that this is the correct way of being. When we do accept this, each of us forms an opinion as to why respect is important, although for some it could simply be because we've been told to believe it.

Each day, and potentially numerous times throughout the day, we make individual decisions about what or whom to respect, or not; sometimes with conscious and considered thought and other times possibly just out of habit or even unconsciously. And of course each situation is often evaluated based on its context.

Do we respect people immediately, or does the respect need to be earned? What's required to earn respect? For what reasons can respect for an individual be taken away?

Is respect for the environment considered when we throw away trash in a bin, or on the ground?

Is respect for a group of people considered when we make policy decisions?

Is respect for another's contribution considered when we feel under pressure to make a decision and/or meet a deadline?

Since there are so many variables to consider, it can be difficult to give a single point of explanation as to why respect is important.

That said, High Ideals is focused on the attitude and behaviour of consciously considering the impact we have when we engage with other people, as we make personal and professional decisions and in how we operate.

We encourage stepping out of our own perspective of any situation and thinking critically about others' needs, view points, contribution, ideas and solutions; to think critically about the impact we have on others and the world around us.

Being respectful also means letting go of our need to be "right" in situations where there is more than one way of looking at something, and allowing others to share their perspective and recommendations without judgement or having to "fight" for our position.

When people feel respected, they often also feel heard, valued, appreciated, included, engaged with and considered significant. When respected, people will often contribute more often and in positive ways.

When people feel disrespected, they often feel ignored, not worthy, excluded and insignificant. When disrespected, people may choose to not contribute and/or be reactive in negative ways.

Why is it so easy to slip up in the area of respect?

It would seem a fairly clear and easy value proposition to choose respect, but when we're not paying attention to the impact of our own attitudes, beliefs and actions we may in fact be disrespecting ourselves and others.

Disrespect happens when we:

- Ignore the contribution of others and/or dismiss the value of their contribution
- Make assumptions about the value, worth, effort, attitudes, beliefs and values of others
- Are inconsiderate about the needs of others
- Not listening well
- Are driven by our need to be "right" at all costs
- Neglect to ask how others think and feel about a situation; choosing to focus on our own thoughts, feelings and needs as the priority
- Lie, cheat, steal and other similar behaviours
- Manipulate others for our own benefits (real or perceived)
- Choose to not take responsibility for our actions where the impact on others has been negative; blame others
- Make decisions without explaining our motives and decision process where it is appropriate and expected that we do
- Dismiss or not acknowledge the feedback received from others, including the compliments they may give us
- Solve problems, or attempt to do so, or give advice to others without permission
- Not saying what we mean – sloppy communication
- Being destructive
- Being ungrateful – not saying "Thank you"

Tips for being respectful

- Create a “charter” or “values statement” which clearly identifies the core professional values, including the commitment to treating all people respectfully. Such a document may work best if it includes the specific, observable and measurable behaviours that when consistently demonstrated would achieve the respectful environment and objectives committed to.
- Create a list of respectful behaviours based on your concept of “good manners”. Put the behaviours into action.
- Create a list of respectful behaviours based on your concept of “diplomacy”. Put the behaviours into action.

Characteristics and/or behaviours of a person who is respectful?

- Actively listens
- Ask questions more often than makes statements
- Patient
- Inclusive
- Engaging
- Collaborative
- Good manners
- Diplomatic
- Considerate
- Polite
- Fair
- Honest
- Solution-focused
- Law abiding
- Responsible
- Challenges disrespectful behaviour when observed/experienced

Evaluate your own perspective on respect

- What does “respect” mean to you? How do you recognise the attitude AND behaviours when you see them in yourself and/or others?
- What are your strengths in terms of respect? How do you leverage these and for what purpose?
- What are your opportunities for improvement in terms of respect? What specifically could change and who would benefit from the change and how?
- What reputation do you have in terms of respect? How did you earn this reputation, regardless of whether it’s positive or negative? How do you feel about this reputation?
- What feedback have you received from others about whether you are respectful or not? What have you done with that feedback?
- What’s the greatest lesson, personally and/or professionally, you’ve learnt regarding respect? What did you do with it, or how did you apply that lesson?

Improve your degree of respect

After you have completed your evaluation, if you have noticed some room for improvement, you might like to try some of the following strategies:

- Seek out a person (or persons) who you believe consistently demonstrate “respect”. Interview them and ask them questions about their own development process to get to where they are now. Consider that this is a mentoring session where it may be expected that you will make a commitment to this person at the end of the interview and that it’ll be necessary for you to follow through.
- Ask for feedback from your colleagues, staff, vendors, partners and customers about how they see your professional attitudes and behaviours as being respectful or not. Give them permission to be honest, acknowledge and thank them for their feedback and make commitments to them about what you will do with the feedback. You may need to prepare yourself for the possibility that you’ll be asked to make agreements with various stakeholders so that they can be more involved, be listened to and that their needs will be met more consistently in the future.
- Consider getting coached or mentored on this area (or any other area you’d like to develop) and work with the coach to determine the actual habits which are effective and those which are negatively impacting your performance of being respectful. If you’re not sure where to start to look for a coach or mentor, the High Ideals member directory includes members who offer these services, which may be a good place to begin your search as you’ll know that those practitioners have also achieved the High Ideals credentials.

Further resources

If you would like to develop further in the area of respect, the following resources may be worth considering.

Please note that High Ideals does not endorse or receive any direct benefit from recommending the following resources. The list is simply a suggestive collection of materials that members of the High Ideals management team have found useful in their own development.

- <http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/respect/> - This is a very well researched and constructed essay on respect published by the Stanford Encyclopaedia of Philosophy. It could be useful in terms of understanding various view points of the concept of respect and its application.
- <http://www.goodcharacter.com/ISOC/Respect.html> - This is a resource site for tools to teach young people about developing good character, including being respectful. Although this may seem like a programme for children, there is value as an adult to look at such topics from a very basic foundation and then expand from there. The site includes questions, discussion points and activities for further self-exploration.
- **Respect: An Exploration** – by Sara Lawrence-Lightfoot. This is one of the few quality books for adults on respect, as so much has actually been written for children. In this book, the author discusses that respect is a mission, a service, a “way to create symmetry, empathy and connection”; about building relationships and self-esteem.
- <http://www.high-ideals.com> – Check out the Member Directory section for High Ideals members who offer services which could support you, such as coaching, mentoring or consulting on High Ideals criteria/values.

Author and editor acknowledgement

High Ideals would like to acknowledge and thank Noel Posus for his work on this document. Noel Posus is the Director of Training, Research and Development for High Ideals as well as a professional coach, educator and author. To find out more about Noel, please visit his profile on the High Ideals directory by clicking [here](#) and search by name.

This document is part of the **High Ideals** Criteria Information Series, edited by Claire Stretch. For more information on Claire please visit her profile on the High Ideals directory by clicking [here](#) and search by name.

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