

3 Primary Points for Teaching Your Teenager to Be a Gentleman

It was the most unlikely training ground for good manners the wrestling room. Coach Ken Praytor's athletic philosophy focused as much on how we conducted ourselves off the wrestling mat as much as during a match. He had rules of conduct. It didn't matter how capable you were as a wrestler, if you didn't live up to his rules, you were not representing the team.

One of the rules that was so out of character was the demand to wear a suit or at minimum a sports coat and tie to tournaments. It was in the late '70s when America was coming out of a cultural revolution. Casual jeans and T-shirts were the norm for most boys our age. When we walked into gymnasiums, everyone looked our way. You could hear the hush of the room and the look of intimidated eyes admiring our presence. Amazingly, the respect transferred onto the mats when the whistle blew.

I learned a lot from Coach Ken, most of which had nothing to do with wrestling. They were life lessons—how to carry yourself in a room, represent yourself in conversation, how to stand upright, how to look at someone in the eyes during conversations, how to shake a hand. Life lessons that distinguished us from our peers.

How to Teach Teenage Boys to Be Gentlemen:

Teach the language of a gentleman: 'Please,' 'Thank you' and 'Excuse me.'

If a young man will habitually use these common phrases, he will be distinguished among his peers as a gentleman. A

restaurant is a good place to practice this is early in the childhood years. Make sure that your child looks directly at the waitress to order his food and to say, "Thank you" when he receives his meal. If he needs to go to the restroom, teach him to say, "Excuse me." If the waiter asks, "Would you like more tea?" Teach him to respond, "Yes, please."

Being a parent doesn't excuse bad manners. I was determined to teach my children how to conduct themselves in a restaurant with courtesy and grace. If they weren't able to do so, I simply wouldn't take them to one. This allowed me to put my children in adult situations and knew that they would represent themselves and me with dignity. My friends marveled at how well-behaved they were. Not because of intimidation or threat of punishment, but because they had manners.

Teach how a gentleman speaks to and treats a female.

It's an old-fashioned word, somewhat archaic in our language. However, it perfectly defines a gentleman's relationship with the opposite sex—he is to be gallant in relationships. Gallant means to, "show special attention and respect toward women in an honorable way." A gallant man treats older women as his own mother, younger women as his own daughter and peers as his own sister. A teenage boy that conducts himself as gallant will be a sure standout among his peers. He will never want for attention from the young ladies because regardless of this culture's avarice to being gallant, a true lady will take notice.

I taught my son how to treat his mother with respect and dignity, showing her special attention. First, I modeled it by opening doors for her, always taking her hand on steps, standing up to greet her properly when I entered the house, or when we've been apart for a time. Then I privately and politely corrected him if he did not do the same.

When my son was about 14 years old, he spoke to his mother with a gruff dismissive tone and inappropriate reply when she asked him a simple question. I asked him to walk outside with me. When we were alone, I said, "Son, you need to understand something. Your mother isn't just your mother, she is also my wife. I don't speak to her that way. I don't allow anyone else to speak to her that way. You don't have permission to speak to her that way either." He understood perfectly and immediately apologized to her. It not only changed the way that he spoke to his mother, but also gave him a new perspective of my wife and I's relationship.

Teach your son how to make eye contact and shake a man's hand.

As an author and speaker, I speak often at men's conferences. Invariably, I will be introduced to a man with his son standing nearby. Usually, the teenager is standing a couple of feet away from his dad as we're engaged in conversation. It is my habit to reach for the young man's hand and pull him into the conversation. I want him to feel welcomed and engaged. Very often, the young man doesn't know how to properly grip a handshake, look me in the eye and introduce himself by name. So, I will do exactly that to him. He will immediately catch on and return the greeting and gesture. Without him knowing it, I just conducted a seminar on being a gentleman. He will remember that moment. He will use it in his future. It will become a starting block of being a gentleman.

As we all do, I reflect upon my high school experience, surveying the things that I learned and the paths that it led me to take in life. There isn't a more profound experience from any teacher that surpasses the lessons that I learned from Coach Ken on how to be a gentleman, not just an athlete.

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*FivestarMan was founded in 2008 by **Neil Kennedy**. Neil has passionately promoted God's Word for 25-plus years of ministry. He is known for practically applying biblical*

principles that elevate people to a new level of living. As a business, church, ministry and life consultant, Neil has helped others strategize the necessary steps to reach their full potential. His full-time focus is now on FivestarMan, and he travels extensively each week, speaking in churches and seminars, challenging men to step up and grab the reins of authentic manhood.

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