

How To Show And Get Respect, Wherever And Whoever You Are

In every culture, in every place, respect is hugely important, but it can mean different things to different people. When working in one of the most multicultural places in the world, this can cause communication issues. The trick is in understanding what respect means where you are, and to the person you are communicating with.

The meaning of a word is always two-fold. There is the denotative meaning—what the dictionary says a word means – and then there is the connotative meaning—what the people using the word mean by it. When trying to communicate, it's the second one we're interested in. Because it's here where mistakes can creep in.

In essence, two things can go wrong—either they can misunderstand you or you can misunderstand them. In both cases it often comes down to a difference in filters.

Humans don't react to what they see and hear. They react to what they *think* about what they see and hear and that depends on filters such as gender, age, race, religion, education and neurology. Our filters are the sum of our experience based on these variables, so what means respect to you could be quite different to someone else. For example, perhaps you find it disrespectful to be late—you may be in the minority on this in the Middle East and perhaps you're learning to live with it.

For example, imagine a middle-aged Japanese man and what respect means to him—he will both show it and expect to receive it in very different ways than, for example, a young Western woman. He will also consider some things worthy of respect that the same woman might not.

It's not about who is right or wrong, it's about learning to communicate effectively. And to that end how you behave when you want to show respect will change. You may be more deferential and congratulatory with one person because that is what you think they need. This allows you to take note of the response and change as necessary.

Taking note of the response is critical. It is by doing this that we can tell whether or not we are getting the reaction that we want. Again, it's important to acknowledge that how we perceive the response is a result of our own filters.

We need to **observe carefully and calibrate**. If you feel that you may have been misunderstood or misinterpreted you can stop, step outside of the conversation you're having, and ask. For example by saying "when I said X, your eyes widened and you took a sharp breath so it seems like you might feel I've said something untoward." Stating what you've seen (the Truth) and then your judgement or explanation of that Truth (your Potential) allows the other person to confirm or deny your understanding.

To be clear, this is not about changing your personality—you still feel the same, but you think about how to help the other person understand you. It's about getting the results

you want and working effectively

We live and work in a place where cross-cultural communication is nuanced and can add a layer of unnecessary complexity. Shouldn't we try that bit harder to be respectful, especially if it's ultimately helping us succeed?

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