

Good Manners and Social Etiquette Is For Everyone: A Tip-Sheet for Seniors

The COVID-19 pandemic changed our lives and most likely even our behavior.

As our world is re-opening to a post-COVID environment, we're all on a journey of re-learning how to talk to people and navigate social situations again after a year of isolation.

If, after staying inside for so long during COVID-19, you feel like your social skills are rusty, check out the tips below to brush up on etiquette.

1. Pay Attention to Your Body Language

Non-verbal communication is very important. Pay attention to the type of body language you use. You'll want to make sure you:

- Uncross your legs and arms
- Stand or sit up straight
- Turn towards people
- Make eye contact
- Relax your shoulders
- Smile

2. Ask Open-Ended Questions

If you want the attention off you in a conversation, get familiar with open-ended questions. Ask questions that require more than a yes or no answer so that you invite the other person to keep the conversation going.

3. Encourage Others to Talk About Themselves

Most people really enjoy talking about themselves. Ask a question about a person's hobbies or family. Show you're interested in hearing what's being said.

4. Offer Compliments Generously

Compliments can be a great way to open the door to a conversation. Compliments can show others that you're friendly.

5. Practice Good Manners

Good manners go a long way in improving social skills. Practice being polite, showing gratitude, and using good table manners.

6. Communicate Gracefully

In today's day and age, you may find yourself in conversation with someone whose point of view you disagree with. Instead of feeling strained or upset by the conversation, follow these tips to manage through it:

1. Appreciate the value of diversity. We gain from sharing opinions and, in the process, feel more invested in society at large.
2. Listen to the other side with an open mind. Diversity of opinions means just that. Recognize that you can learn from each other.
3. Think before you voice your own opinion: Will you be able to justify it? A poorly-conceived argument will only place you on the defensive when you realize its weaknesses. Don't set yourself up for being shot down—it will only contribute to bad feelings.
4. Keep your cool even when the conversation gets hot. Being able to appreciate diversity means that you don't go off the deep end when someone expresses a dissenting opinion.
5. Try to find common ground on which you can agree. It may seem impossible at the time to acknowledge the validity of someone else's argument, but adults should be able to appreciate the gray between the black and white of your viewpoints.
6. Avoid personal insults. It probably goes without saying that you should keep your communication respectful. There's no reason to start assaulting someone else's personal qualities because you happen to have differing views.
7. Keep a sense of humor. Even when serious differences of opinion are being discussed, try to find ways to maintain your perspective.

Good manners and etiquette are not simply rules to live by. They encompass so much more that is not tangible – like morality, kindness, goodness, integrity, honor, honesty, and consideration – for others.

The bottom line? Treat others as you would want to be treated.

After a bit of practice, your social skills will be right back where they were pre-COVID. Let's all enjoy getting back into our social graces.