

The most important qualities of an outstanding educator are respect for himself, others, and learning. When one infuses respect in his life and those around them, relationships can be forged. Nothing is more important to fostering learning than the relationship between a teacher and a student. This can be accomplished by maintaining high expectations, practicing tolerance and justice when enforcing the expectations, and not judging. Additionally, the educator needs to grow by continually seeking new knowledge to integrate into his base of experiences.

Showing respect begins with not judging others. This opens us up to discover how we can contribute to making ourselves and others grow and feel competent. A story by Stephen R. Covey talked about some disruptive children traveling with their oblivious father on a subway. The other passengers were growing very angry and uncomfortable. So, Mr. Covey confronts the father by asking him if he could control his son because the other passengers were becoming irritated. The father looks up in a trance of sorts and says, "...Oh, you're right. I guess I should do something about it. We just came from the hospital where their mother died about an hour ago..." Instantly Mr. Covey experienced a paradigm shift and wished he had instead asked the man if there is anything he could do to help. I believe those who feel right behave right. We should assume that when a student is not engaged in learning it is because they don't feel right either physically, mentally, or emotionally.

Having high expectation of our self and others is another way of showing respect. Although we should not judge, we should never lower our expectations of others. We should always expect more because we all have more capacity to give and learn. I was assisting a physically challenged young man at the YMCA one morning. I discovered that his father told him to walk 3 mi/hr. on the treadmill. I did not think the father was encouraging the young man to reach his potential. I encouraged the young man to walk 4 mi/hr. and work up to 5 mi/hr. I then took him to do strength training and had him practice several complicated combinations of moves while focusing on form. I realized that just balancing was difficult for him; therefore, I assessed his strength and attentiveness and broke down the

movements until he was fluid. I have high expectations for myself and for everyone around me as each have value and something to offer. Life is not about staying in one place, it is about reaching new potentials.

Having high expectations should be tempered with a sense of realism and understanding that everyday an individual's aptitude and ability changes. Respecting limits is critical for continual growth. I always tell my children that I expect them to do their best, yet I understand that their best can vary day to day. When I have youth from the soccer team join practice after being sick I advise them to listen to their bodies and not push themselves physically. They should focus on form, team work, and strategy. Teaching others that we all have daily limitations is critical for them to heal and rejuvenate. It is important to recognize times and areas where we are not at our best. We need to forgive and love ourselves in these times. This valuable attribute supports a sense of resiliency. Giving love and forgiveness to students helps them do their best and shows them that I respect them even when their performance may be lagging.

Lastly, we should continually seek knowledge. We need to embrace the challenge of learning something new. We need to love the fact that we have the freedom, right, and responsibility to discover wondrous things. I understand the importance of learning from my students. I expect them to gain and share knowledge with me and their classmates. Learning can be difficult. However, I love the challenge of learning even when it makes me cry in frustration. As each day passes, we have to push on with our learning and be grateful for life's treasures.

I'm grateful for my desire gain knowledge, to overcome difficulties in learning, and to share what I have learned. It is important to curb judgment, maintain high expectations, and be forgiving and loving in order to maintain respect. Knowledge is the key to opening doors in one's life physically, mentally, emotionally, and spiritually. If we do not push to meet challenges and continue to learn we will have nothing to share. During my son's speech for his Eagle Scout Court of Honor he stated that

many people are bright, many people create amazing things or do amazing feats, but the only thing that makes our life worth living is for us to share what we have learned. This is the legacy I would like to leave.