

RAISING  
*Respectful*  
CHILDREN  
IN A  
*Disrespectful*  
WORLD

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JILL RIGBY GARNER

REDEMPTION  
PRESS 

# **PRAISE FOR RAISING RESPECTFUL CHILDREN IN A DISRESPECTFUL WORLD**

If you're looking for a book that will pat you on the back and coddle you with warm platitudes and hugs asserting, "There, there, now. You're doing the best you can do as a parent," you've picked up the wrong book. Jill Garner pulls no punches as she speaks truth to parents, snapping them out of their complacency and placing the responsibility of raising respectful children squarely on their shoulders. Although the truth may sting, Jill also offers the salve of clear direction that will help parents reach their desired goal for their kids' honorable character. A must-read for every household.

—**Dr. Sharon Norris Elliott**, author of  
*Didn't See That Coming: When How They're  
Living's Not How You Raised Them*

This book is desperately needed now more than ever. Most of us can't figure out why the children around us are rebelling as individuals and a generation. *Raising Respectful Children in a Disrespectful World* gives not only understanding for our uncertainty but practical insights and godly responses that will minister to the hearts of those hurting children. Adults aren't unloving because of meanness but because we just don't

understand the core heart of children trying to navigate a confusing world. As a lay counselor, I'll be recommending this book to every parent I counsel.

—**Kathy Collard Miller**, international speaker and author of more than sixty books, including *No More Anger: Hope for an Out-of-Control Mom*

As Christian parents, we want our children to be respectful and responsible and to represent Christ well. In a world that is increasingly becoming anti-Christian and instilling a self-centered agenda, it is hard to raise godly, moral, respectful children. Jill's book shares important information with godly instruction. She states, "The next generation is ready for the absolute truth. They want and need the world to be turned right side up again. It's our duty to develop the spiritual muscle needed to help them." Each chapter helps us fulfill our parenting commission. This is a book all parents, grandparents, and caregivers need to help their children become respectful representatives of Christ and, hopefully, change the world for Christ.

—**Lee Ann Mancini**, professor, author, speaker, executive producer of *Sea Kids*, founder of nonprofit Raising Christian Kids, Inc.

*Raising Respectful Children in a Disrespectful World* is power packed with practical, biblical, and logical parenting truths, tips, and tools that will help you walk alongside children of all ages, guiding them to reach their God-given potential. Jill, thanks for giving readers ideas they can apply immediately that bring help and *hope* to parents and the next generation of young people.

—**Pam Farrel**, author of fifty-eight books, including *10 Best Decisions a Parent Can Make* and best-selling *Men Are Like Waffles, Women Are Like Spaghetti*

If you're concerned about the negative effect popular culture is having on America's children, and you want to know what you can do to prevent your child from falling under its sway, then you need to read this book and do what Jill Rigby Garner says, because she's right, and that's all there is to it.

—**John Rosemond**, author of *Parenting by the Book*

Jill explains what it means to raise children of purpose as she shares practical, godly how-to principles to help parents teach their children to respect others and gain self-respect in the process.

—**Dennis Rainey**,  
president of Family Life

In this age of overindulgence and underparenting, *Raising Respectful Children in a Disrespectful World* gives sound advice that will transform your family. With courage and conviction, Jill Rigby Garner debunks many of the conventional beliefs in child-rearing, replacing them with the wisdom of experience.

—**Dr. Kevin Leman**, author of  
*Making Children Mind without Losing Yours*

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**OTHER WORKS BY JILL GARNER**

*Raising Unselfish Children in a Self-Absorbed World*

*Manners of the Heart Curriculum* (Pre-K)

*Manners of the Heart Curriculum* (Kindergarten)

*Manners of the Heart Curriculum* (First Grade)

*Manners of the Heart Curriculum* (Second Grade)

*Manners of the Heart at the Table*

*Manners of the Heart at Home*

To our children, and their spouses,  
Chad and Elise, and Boyce,  
Robert and Mary, Rich and Sally, Burton and Lea,  
and their children, our grandchildren,  
Garett, Jack, Allie, Alston, Kate, Elliott, and Addison.

*For your sakes,  
I keep writing, hoping, and praying.*



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## CHAPTER 1

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# What Went Wrong?

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*F*or more than two generations, we have been loving ourselves, believing in ourselves, esteeming ourselves, and teaching our children to do the same. Look at the devastation left behind:

- A generation of entitled, high-maintenance, emotionally fragile young adults in need of constant validation.
- The highest percentage of unemployed adults, not looking for work, that has ever existed in our country.
- The marriage rate of millennials is only 26 percent. Compare that to 36 percent for Generation X, 48 percent for baby boomers, and 65 percent for the Mature Silents.
- Seventy-three percent of Gen Z report they feel alone either sometimes or always.<sup>1</sup>
- Children being exposed to ideologies that are beyond all reason.

- A train of thought pervading our culture that says we can become whichever gender we choose.

These are examples of the aftermath of self-esteem—two generations drowning in narcissism.

The danger signs were right in front of our noses. For more than twenty years, *Manners of the Heart* has been sounding the alarm,

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Self-respect is the fruit of discipline; the sense of dignity grows with the ability to say no to oneself.

—ABRAHAM J. HESCHEL

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trying to convince our society that if we did not make an about-face back to timeless truth, we would destroy ourselves. We knew what the inevitable outcome of self-esteem would be from our immersion in the day-to-day work

of helping teachers teach children who were lost in themselves, either self-conceited or self-conscious.

Why did anyone ever think that raising children to believe in themselves, love themselves, and esteem themselves would lead to anything but narcissism?

Jean Twenge, author of *The Narcissism Epidemic*, notes, “In trying to build a society that celebrates high self-esteem, self-expression, and ‘loving yourself,’ Americans have inadvertently created more narcissists—and a culture that brings out the narcissistic behavior in all of us.”<sup>2</sup>

In this chapter, you will find there is a window of hope. If we raise the present generation to believe in *others*, love *others*, and esteem *others*, this generation can recover from the damage of self-esteem and lead a restoration of respect that can rebuild our society.



When I was growing up, people weren't perfect, but society was certainly more civil. The lines between right and wrong were clear. There was a sense of law and order.

Teachers were teachers. So teachers taught.

Parents were parents. So parents parented.

Kids were kids. So kids obeyed.

Respect for authority was paramount. Service to others and respect for property were natural elements of community. Teaching manners and instilling character were the cornerstones of public education. Parents looked at the right side of the report card (conduct) before they looked at the left (grades). Kids got in a lot more trouble if they were disrespectful to a teacher than if they made a B minus.

Times past weren't perfect, but there certainly was an attitude of respectfulness that's now missing.

Today we live in a society where:

- Sensationalism in the media makes it difficult to distinguish a lie from the truth.
- Incessant texting takes place at the family dinner table, in classrooms, in boardrooms, while driving, and even during face-to-face conversations.
- Foul language is used in public, not only by males in the presence of females but by females in the presence of males.

I could fill this book with one example after another of disrespectful behavior. How did this happen? How did our respectful world become so disrespectful? We substituted self-esteem for self-respect, and in the process, we lost our manners.

## **We Replaced Self-Respect with Self-Esteem**

More than thirty years ago, when I began visiting my twin sons' school cafeteria to teach table manners, I had no concept that a volunteer project for a local school would grow into a full Heart Education program that is now being used in schools and homes across the country. Since then, *Manners of the Heart* (a curriculum for schools) and *Manners of the Heart at Home* (a parents' guide to the school curriculum) have been changing the lives of children, families, and communities.

My experience of working with children and parents has convinced me that the troubles of today can be traced back to the early seventies, when a group of psychologists began theorizing why the rebellion of the sixties had taken place. Some experts concluded that the fifties were a time of such rigidity that teenagers who grew up in the “era of rules” were destined to revolt.

The overwhelming majority of professionals, however, agreed that the reason teenagers rebelled was because of a deep need to be someone—not just an American but an individual. Not a member of a corporate body but an individual making his or her own decisions based on personal beliefs, not the beliefs of parents or society. “Believe in yourself” became the mantra of the day.

Specialists began telling parents that the secret to raising healthy children was to build their self-esteem. Books on the subject of self-esteem skyrocketed to the top of bestseller lists, encouraging parents to be friends, not authority figures, with their kids. Discipline was out. Experts said that children needed to make their own decisions. Slowly but surely, children became the center of the universe.

Parents today are still being told that the secret to raising healthy children is to build their self-esteem—praise 'em in the morning, praise 'em in the noontime, praise 'em when the sun goes down.

We've been told to never deny our children anything and to stand against anyone who dares to correct our little ones—all with the goal of helping our kids feel good about themselves.

I received the following letter from parents who had done all they were told to do in raising their fourteen-year-old son:

He has very low self-esteem and very little motivation or desire to succeed in play or academics. We try to use positive reinforcement and praise him for completing projects or whatever we see him do well or put effort into. We make a point not to compare him to other children, but he tries hard to be like others (he really doesn't know what he likes or even who he is). He is in trouble at school almost every day for disrespect, and we know that he can do better . . . he just needs to know that he can, and he has to want to try to do better. Please help! Any suggestions?

These parents had followed the advice of the day. But rather than help their son, they had unwittingly hurt him.

One of my favorite no-nonsense parenting experts, John Rosemond, agrees that by emphasizing self-esteem, we've lost something of great value:

Character development has been de-emphasized and psychological development has become the focus. As this babble rose to a din, our collective perceptions of children began to change. We began to view them not as fairly durable little people who needed to be taught respect, responsibility, good manners, and the like, but as fragile little containers of something called self-esteem, which could be irreparably damaged with a harsh word.<sup>3</sup>

As a result of this emphasis on self-esteem, twenty-somethings are returning home rather than facing the world on their own. College kids are flunking out because they don't know how to manage their schedules. Kids are growing up without problem-solving skills because their parents think love means solving all their problems for them. Many adolescents have no respect for authority because their parents didn't command their respect. Instead, these parents gave too much and expected too little.

In our attempt to build self-esteem in children, we have reared a generation of young people who are failing at life, haven't a clue who they are, and are struggling to find a reason for living. These kids fall for the latest craze, healthy or unhealthy. It doesn't matter, as long as they're in the middle of it. They would rather die than give up their cell phones. And they feel that others have an obligation to serve them.

Roy F. Baumeister, professor of psychology at Florida State University, was a proponent of self-esteem in the early seventies but has since changed his views. Forty years later, Baumeister now recommends, "Forget about self-esteem and concentrate more on self-control and self-discipline. Recent work suggests this would be good for the individual and good for society—and might even be able to fill some of those promises that self-esteem once made but could not keep."<sup>4</sup>

I agree. Rather than seeking to build self-esteem in our children, we need to focus on building self-control and self-discipline, which will develop self-respect.

Many people use the words *self-esteem* and *self-respect* synonymously, but I believe the two are worlds apart. When we seek to help kids feel good about themselves (the goal of self-esteem), we teach them to focus on *themselves* and how *they* feel and what *they* want. I believe this perspective keeps children from participating in

the world; it encourages them to see everything as if looking into a mirror, so they grow up believing “it’s all about me.”

Kids raised with a focus on self-esteem have an unbalanced view of the world. They live by the motto “I want it, and I want it now.” Kids with this attitude aren’t exhibiting self-confidence. They are exhibiting self-conceit, a view of themselves that says they are superior to others.

But when we help kids respect themselves, we teach them to focus on *others* and how *others* feel and what *others* need. This perspective, in turn, leads children to see everything through a window, seeing their own images reflected against the world beyond the glass, rather than in a mirror, and to grow up believing “it’s more about others and less about me.”

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Respect for ourselves  
guides our morals; respect  
for others guides our  
manners.

So what’s the bottom-line difference between self-esteem

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—LAURENCE STERNE (1713–1768)

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and self-respect? Self-esteem is “me centered,” while self-respect is “others centered.”

The quest for self-esteem has turned the world upside down. Shifting to the pursuit of self-respect will turn the world right side up again. Why? Because kids with self-respect put others ahead of themselves. They feel an obligation to others and a responsibility to society. Bullies can’t rock their foundation, because kids who have self-respect know who they are and what they stand for. They have a balanced view of the world. Their confidence is balanced with humility; they exhibit humble confidence.

If you are parenting to build self-respect in your children, you’ll focus on who your kids are becoming rather than on how much you give to them. You’ll teach them how to serve others rather than to



expect to be served. You'll teach them to contribute to the world rather than to expect the world to give to them. You'll teach your kids to do their best, whether that means being number one or not, and to work toward goals so they can experience the satisfaction and confidence that a job well done brings.

Let's sum up the different results of these two parenting goals:

- The result of parenting to build self-esteem?  
Undisciplined, rude, greedy, disrespectful, and ill-mannered children.
- The result of parenting to develop self-respect?  
Disciplined, caring, productive, respectful, and well-mannered children.

Unfortunately, because our society for the past four decades has emphasized self-esteem rather than self-respect in kids, we have far more disrespectful children than respectful children. Consequently, old-fashioned courtesies are considered unimportant, and we've lost our moral foundation.

### **We Lost Our Manners and Therefore Lost Our Morals**

Today, it's the rare child who says:

"Please."

"May I help you?"

"Yes, sir" and "Yes, ma'am." (Yes, I'm from the Deep South. Frankly, I wish the rest of the country would follow us on this one. There is no better vehicle for teaching young children respect than through the use of "sir" and "ma'am.")

"May I get your chair?"

"Excuse me."

“Thank you.”

“I’m sorry.”

In the quest for self-esteem, such courtesies have become uncommon, at least among the members of the new royalty. Little princes and princesses are not expected to humble themselves before others by extending common courtesies.

Judith Martin, better known as the syndicated columnist “Miss Manners,” offered this insightful explanation of the critical importance of manners in a column a few years back:

The attitude that the wishes of others do not matter is exactly what manners are intended to counter. And no one has yet come up with a satisfactory substitute for family etiquette training in the earliest years of life to foster the development of the child in such principles of manners as consideration, cooperation, loyalty, respect . . . As a result of the ever-wider abandonment of home etiquette training, schools have become increasingly stymied by problems they identify as lack of discipline and commitment to moral behavior . . . A society can hope to function virtuously only when it also recognizes the legitimacy of manners.<sup>5</sup>

Respect lies at the heart of manners and morals. A person’s respect for authority, respect for others, and respect for self go a long way toward determining the moral decisions that person makes. Manners instilled in the early years become the foundation for moral behavior in the later years.

Scripture affirms the relationship of morals and manners—the content of the heart (morals) is the basis for outward behavior:

The good man brings good things out of the good stored up in his heart, and the evil man brings evil things out of the evil stored up in his heart. For out of the overflow of his heart his mouth speaks. (Luke 6:45)

Good people do good things because of the good in their hearts. Bad people do bad things because of the evil in their hearts. Your words show what is in your heart. (Luke 6:45 CEV)

It's who you are, not what you say and do, that counts. Your true being brims over into true words and deeds. (Luke 6:45 MSG)

In other words, the respectful child produces good deeds from a good heart, and a disrespectful child produces bad deeds from a corrupted heart. Whatever is in your child's heart, whether good, bad, or ugly, determines what your child will say and do.

If you want to raise respectful children in our disrespectful world, you must command their respect through a balance of love and discipline, especially in the little things. When it comes to working with kids, the little things *are* the big things. And the younger the child, the more important the little things. Raising respectful children requires loving your child enough to not give in to the indulgent request of the moment. It means loving your child enough to stop what you're doing to fully listen. When your children respect you, they will more easily respect God, and in the process respect others and themselves.

Is it possible to fill the hearts of our children with the "right stuff"? Can we raise respectful children in a disrespectful world? You'd better believe it. It's not as hard as you might think. It just takes

spiritual muscle and emotional fortitude. Both are within reach, if you know where to turn.

The next generation is ready for the absolute truth. They want and need the world to be turned right side up again. It's our duty to develop the spiritual muscle needed to help them.

### **Your Charge**

In John 17:15, Jesus asked the Father not to take His disciples out of the world but to protect them from the evil in the world. Our charge as parents is to prepare our children to be *in* the world and not *of* the world. We must train them to stand on their own two feet. With loving guidance, our children can affect the world with goodness without becoming infected by it.

You can equip your children with humble confidence so they can handle whatever comes at them. It's not your children's minds that will help them do that but their hearts.

Let the disrespectful world attempt to force its errant teaching on your children. You *can* raise respectful children in this disrespectful world who will be able to withstand the onslaught of the lies by offering the absolute truth.