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Manners Place You "Tops"

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HOW are your manners? Careless and happy-go-lucky? Or careful, tactful and gracious? The ability to put others at ease will bring upon you that compliment of compliments, "I like to be with her. She never stumbles through an introduction, gets the jitters in a new situation, or embarrasses me by being conspicuous. She knows the score."

The blase, "why bother?" manner is out; the rough-and-tumble, laugh-it-off attitude does not go. Naturalness, combined with thoughtful consideration for others, makes you "tops" with friends and strangers, professors and family.

Charming manners come from a thorough knowledge of the simple rules of etiquette. Take that bugbear-introductions. An awkward situation may be changed to a pleasant means of starting the conversational ball rolling. The trick is in knowing which victim is introduced to which. That is not so hard. The name of the older or the more-honored person is always mentioned first. Ladies are more honored than men. Always present:

1. A gentle man to a lady. "Mrs. Jones, may I present Mr. Smith?" or "Miss Brown, Mr. Smith."
2. An unmarried lady to a married lady. "Mrs. Jones, may I present Miss Brown?"
3. A younger man to an older man. "Dr. Jones, may I present Mr. Hall?"

Use your wits to prevent the introduction from falling flat. Drop a hint or two about the people concerned. "Mary, I'd like to have you know Jim Jones. He's from Chicago and I think he knows your brother. Jim, this is Mary Smith." Now they have several conversation starters.

Don't be afraid of introductions. Don't be bothered if you do sometimes introduce people who have already met. And don't be worried about forgetting names; everyone does that occasionally.

When acknowledging an introduction, shun "Pleased to meet you!" like the plague. The only correct formal acknowledgement of an introduction is "How do you do?" said with a friendly, spontaneous smile. Appear glad to know the person. Shake hands if you feel the inclination, or if the other person offers his hand. A limp or bone-crushing handshake is worse than none. The proper handshake is brief, warm, strong, and firm. A flattering trick is to catch the name of the person you have just met.

Justifiable peeves mentioned by some Iowa State men are broken dates, sarcasm, lipstick applied in public, loudly-chewed gum, crooked stocking seams, incessant chattering about nothing, and waiting half an hour in the dormitory parlor for "the date." Just because that extra pause beforehand makes a grand entrance into the room, you forget that a hundred extra pauses do not render the man that many times more breathless with anticipation. The teeth-clenching patience of countless men who sit and wait for dates is indeed to be admired. But it is so unnecessary. When you get that next parlor call, dab a bit of powder on your nose, pick up your wrap, and stroll down the stairs. You will receive a silent blessing. Your evening will have had a cheerful beginning.

There is a lot in your attitude when on a date. Act as if you were having a good time, and you will have a good time. The man of the evening deserves your interested attention. Conversational taboos are your other dates and conquests, and your ideas of the best fraternity on the campus. Show some intelligence in the conversation. And remember that your hard-working pals have financial troubles like your own; use discretion in ordering triple-decked sandwiches with double malted milks.

When the man asked you for the date, he arranged a date with you, not Joan Crawford, Janet Gaynor or that senior with the blond braid. You get the idea. If you don't happen to be the slyly siren or the fluttery ingenuous, you had better be just plain self—a natural, alive, unsophisticated personality.

The age of chivalry is not past. Give men the chance to open doors for you and help you with your coat. Thank them for their thoughtfulness. Be appreciative.

The whole question of manners centers around consideration of others. The following might be a series of pictures:

- Four girls walking abreast down a campus walk and talking loudly.
- A telephone conversation half an hour long.
- The after-date crowd inside the dormitory door ignoring the indications of closing time.

Chaperons sitting neglected at a dance or fireside.
A scrappy, illegible theme.
A couple bumped on the dance floor with no apology offered.
Chatterboxes at the theater.
A door being opened for a thankless student.
You are all humans. And humans forget, even when they know better. Yet delightful manners are not to be taken off and put on like a coat. When they are learned they become a part of you.

Don't be stumped by an artichoke's head:
Treat it with ease and grace instead.
Don't be a mule in a queen's boudoir:
Know etiquette rules and you'll be up to par.

—by Peggy Schenk.