



February 2008

Character Council Educator Quality of the Month Deference

Deference:

Limiting my freedom so I do not offend the tastes of those around me

I will:

- notice those around me
- respect the feelings of others
- not use offensive language
- not play loud music in public
- be careful how I dress

Ralph Waldo Emerson's words are the basis for this month's activities. He said, "Every man I meet is my superior in some way." How could he say this, knowing that his intellect was far greater than the great majority of people he would ever meet? This month, let's look for the superior in those we meet and choose our words and actions to show deference to those around us.

☺ **Prized Possessions** Bring in something that is personal to you that is a prized possession but may not look valuable. A pair of well-worn slippers, an item belonging to someone who has since passed away or a gift from a treasured friend. Also bring in something with an obvious high value that really means nothing to you, perhaps something that is headed for the goodwill box, a cashmere sweater, a leather purse, etc. Without explaining what the items are, ask the class which has the greater value. They will choose the item with higher monetary value, not the one with the higher sentimental value. Explain why the other item is more valuable to you. Describe the difference in respect or deference that you have for the item on which you place the higher value. Ask the students to think of an item that they own that has great sentimental value. How would they feel if someone treated that item with disrespect? Relate these feelings to the value that we each have and the respect that we each deserve.



☺ **Deference Detectives** Our society has become so casual that rudeness has become commonplace. This month, commission your students to become Deference Detectives. Start by discussing the ways that people are rude to each other. Use different settings, such as at school, on the bus, in a movie theater, at home, etc in order to broaden the approach. Ask the students to be extra observant, looking for ways other people are polite or exercise good manners. Have them report each day or week what they witness. Discuss why these behaviors are important. Ask them to imagine what may have happened if a person had been rude instead of kind. You may want to add a daily discussion or focus on a particular manner. For younger students, you will want to stick with the basics – raising your hand, saying thank you, etc. For older students, you may want to locate information more related to the adult world such as items from Emily Post.



☺ **Sweet Words** This demonstration will show that how we speak and act will invite deference or respect to be shown to us. Fill a large shallow bowl or pan with water and sprinkle pepper onto the surface of the water. The pepper represents people around us. Explain that our words and actions will either draw people toward us to be our friends or will push people away. Imagine the bowl or pan divided in half. Pick a point that is in the center of one of the halves and touch a bar of soap to the surface away from the soap just as others are picked up. Pick a point that is in the center of the other half of pepper will be attracted to the sugar just as kind actions.



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513.467.0170 mrussell@charactercincinnati.org

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