

Zits, Washington's Manners & Rules

by Terry "TJ" Wisner

"Like...what's that on your face?" the young girl blurted out to another young girl in the mall. Being less than ten feet away, I couldn't help but see the zit was bigger than the nose on a clown in the Fourth of July parade. She couldn't have been any ruder? I don't think so. How could she say that in front of the girl's friends and several strangers?

We see poor manners everywhere...the mall, theatre, restaurants, airports...anywhere people gather. A very good friend, Sybil Atwood, once shared her concern with what she phrased, "the end of civility" in our society. Once again, Sybil has inspired me to dig a little deeper.

Now I know you're wondering "How is TJ going to tie Zits, Washington and Independence Day together?" Washington was our first President, Independence Day, that's a simple one, but what about zits? Believe it or not, at the age of sixteen, Washington wrote a list of rules for civil behavior. It's widely thought he did so for a penmanship assignment or school project.

There are 110 Rules on the list and some are difficult to interpret. However, if we applied these rules in our daily life, we wouldn't need to worry about the end of civility. Let's look at a few of the rules: (This is really good advice for everything from dating to selling and employee communication.)

Good Listening Skills #4- In the Presence of others sing not to your self with a humming Noise, nor Drum with your Fingers or Feet.

Non-Verbal communication #20-The Gestures of the Body must be Suited to the discourse you are upon.

Good communication skills #74-When Another Speaks be attentive your Self and disturb not the Audience if any hesitate in his Words help him not nor Prompt him without desired, Interrupt him not, nor Answer him till his Speech be ended. (I'm not really sure about this one, but it sounds right!)

Politeness #107-If others talk at the table, be attentive but talk not with meat in your mouth. (Unless you are at Buffalo Wild Wings! I can't help but think how most of these rules were taught to us as small children.)

Being a good boss #59-Never express anything unbecoming, not Act against the Rules Moral before your inferiors and **#67**-Detract not from others neither be excessive in Commanding.

The Rules tell us where to walk, when to sit and how to greet others. Rule #9 was particularly helpful for me; Spit not in the Fire, nor Stoop low before it neither Put your Hands into the Flames to warm them, nor Set your Feet upon the Fire especially if there be meat before it.

Perhaps the young lady in the mall should have followed rule #71; Gaze not on the marks or blemishes of Others and ask not how they came. (Keep civility alive!)

Follow rule #110-Labor to keep alive in your breast that little spark of celestial fire called conscience.

As always, thank you Sybil, my old friend. May you rest in peace!

Many of these rules truly apply in the interactions of everyday life. If improving your performance in interpersonal skills is a high priority for you and/or you would like a copy of Washington's Rules of Civility and Decent Behavior simply drop us an email request at info@byocpo.com and an electronic copy will be sent to you.

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