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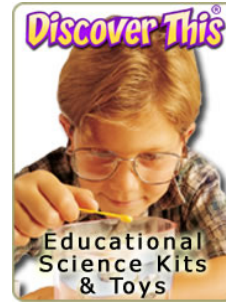


THE FAMILY GROOVE GET IT

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CERTIFIED ETIQUETTE TRAINER KARI DOODY, OWNER OF COURTEOUS AND COOL ETIQUETTE SCHOOL, TEACHES THE ALMOST LOST ART OF MANNERS, POISE AND GRACIOUSNESS TO GENERATION NEXT. HERE, SHE GIVES YOU HER TOP TIPS FOR HELPING YOUR KIDS BE MIGHTY POLITE-Y THIS HOLIDAY SEASON—AND BEYOND.



The holidays can be a joyous time and a stressful time for many of us with kids. For me, just getting them dressed and ready for a social event is enough to make me crazy. Explaining to them *why* they have to dress up and *why* we have to be on time and reminding them that they need to be on their best behavior is just the beginning of my stress.



Every Christmas, my husband and I take our three kids to a big holiday event at a local country club. They decorate the place to the nines and have carolers, little cities staged in the room with trains running through them and one of the best Santa Clauses you have ever seen! It's one of those events that gets us all into the holiday spirit. However, every year I am on edge in fear of what my kids might do at the event. After all, it is a formal affair.

With all that excitement going on, it is inevitable that one of my kids—like most kids—will throw his or her manners out the door. That's when I start to sweat. Will my son break the train that I told him not to touch? Will my youngest daughter trip the waiter as she is chasing Santa Claus?

We all have our worries. All parents shudder at the thought of their children not sitting in their seats, running around, chewing with their mouths open and, worst of all, playing with their food. So what can we do to make our lives easier during the holidays? Here are some tips:

1. Try to have a few family meals a week. They don't have to be fancy, but this is a great time to refresh your kids' memories on how to use a knife, fork, spoon and napkin. It is also a good time to remind them when to use "please" and "thank you."
2. Talk to them about how to greet people in advance. Remind them that when they meet someone, they should make eye contact, shake their hand and say hello. If they are timid, tell them to just try to figure out what color of eyes the "new" person has. My kids think it's fun and make a game out of it. That way, they are making eye contact without thinking about it.
3. Tell your kids to be flexible and patient with food. Parties and big events often take longer than a normal meal at home. People don't always eat at the same time as you do, and feeding a lot of people takes extra time to prepare. Parents, if you think you will be served later than usual, bring a snack!
4. Increase your children's conversation skills. Talk to them about conversations and how they should be like a tennis match. Encourage them to ask questions and use more than one-word "yes" or "no" answers. Practice at home having a "tennis match conversation" with your children. You can even toss a ball back and forth until they get the hang of it.
5. Now on to gift receiving. Children are not born knowing how to politely respond to gifts, and in their childlike honesty, they can say some impolite things. We as parents must rehearse these situations with them. Have a conversation with your children about what to say when you get something you already have or don't care for. Explain to them why we need to use tact and how it could really hurt the gift-giver's feelings if they say they don't like something. Tell them to find something positive about the gift. Maybe they already have one of granny's itchy sweaters from last Christmas, but maybe this year it is in their favorite color. It's amazing what wonderful results occur with a bit of practice.
6. Put technology away! That means you, too, mom and dad. Kids spend way too much time playing on their handheld games and talking or texting on the phone. You don't want them to miss out on all the fun memories being made. Instead, get your children to take pictures with a disposable camera or let them borrow yours. They can create their own memories and stay busy!

Just remember that if you set a good example and behave how you want your children to behave, then they

will follow your lead. As Emily Post said: "Manners are a sensitive awareness of the feelings of others. If you have that awareness, you have good manners, no matter which fork you use."



Kari Doody, certified etiquette trainer and founder of Courteous and Cool Etiquette School, is a mother of 3 kids ages 11, 8 and 5. She was born and raised in Southern California and was taught at a young age to appreciate the value of good manners. After sharing stories with other moms and seeing what role models kids today are exposed to, she recognized the need to start a modern social skills program that would empower today's tech savvy kids. For more from Kari, go to www.courteousandcool.com.