

## RESPECTFUL LEADERSHIP

*“Love ... does not dishonor others ...”* – I Corinthians 13

Respect means seeing the humanity in each individual person.

As a servant leader, you show respect by acknowledging others and initiating contact with them, whether they are friends or strangers. You know the importance of letting others know they are seen and heard, and that they matter simply for being who they are.

Servant leaders can't afford to ignore or dismiss the people around them. And a respectful attitude isn't something you can fake; people know when you are being insincere. Showing respect toward others becomes easier when you cultivate a genuine love of humanity.

### Key Actions for Being Respectful

- **Show a sense of inclusiveness by interacting with all people and every kind of person.**

#### **Avoid bias and favoritism in deciding who you choose to interact with.**

People are social by nature, and it feels good to be welcomed and included by others. But sometimes, we encounter someone who wants to divide people up into groups according to who they feel is “in” or “out.”

A servant leader doesn't fear people who are different; he or she knows that every human being on this planet is worthy of respect. True leaders feel comfortable approaching anyone and everyone, and they treat all people equally.

No one likes to feel excluded or left out. As a leader, you make a difference when you reach out to guests, hosts, co-workers, fellow leaders, and strangers on the street – even if it is just to say hello or wish them a good day.

- **Acknowledge the presence of others and greet them warmly.**

#### **Demonstrate the actions for initiating contact.**

Servant leaders don't ignore the people around them. They are confident about reaching out to people and letting others know that they have been noticed, seen, and heard. Don't wait for others to make contact with you. Seek them out by engaging in these kinds of behaviors:

- Make eye contact and smile.
- When you see people for the first time each day, greet them by name. (*“Good morning, Jenny! How are you today?”*)
- When meeting someone for the first time, greet them, offer a handshake or wave, and share your name. (*“Hello, I'm Steve. It's nice to meet you.”*)
- Exchange pleasantries and remember your good manners, using words like *“please,” “thank you,”* and *“excuse me.”* Social niceties make a significant difference toward making people feel welcomed and respected.

## Key Actions for Being Respectful (continued)

### • Build rapport and show interest in others.

Rapport building consists of taking some simple steps to interact with others and help them feel that they are interesting and important. When you make a regular practice of building rapport, you get to know others, uncover shared values, and build trust.

#### **Make small talk and put others at ease.**

Making small talk means exploring everyday topics that are perceived as safe. While some people dislike this practice, making small talk is a healthy way to start developing healthy, respectful relationships.

Topics that are suitable for small talk include:

- The weather
- Weekend free time
- How family members are doing
- Arts and entertainment such as movies, books, and television shows
- Local or national sports events
- Vacations or travel plans
- Hobbies
- Hometown, local, or human interest news

To keep the conversation comfortable, avoid topics that are not suitable for small talk. While these topics may be okay to discuss with those you know well, it could be considered disrespectful to bring them up when you're just getting to know someone. These include:

- Financial matters
- Politics and government affairs
- Personal religious beliefs
- Personal hygiene habits
- Private family matters
- Past relationships
- Sarcasm or inappropriate jokes
- Complaints

#### **Ask open-ended questions and invite others to share.**

When you have good working relationships with the people you lead, you can show greater respect to them by taking an interest in their lives. In these conversations you are moving beyond small talk and learning what is truly important to others.

Open-ended questions help you show your interest in others in a safe way, because they invite an extended response, and let the other person reveal as much – or as little – as they feel comfortable sharing. When someone responds to your open-ended question, simply listen. You may ask additional questions to help them open up more, but the opportunity is to let them share in a way that leads to a feeling of connection. Consider open-ended questions that can bring out the best in others.

#### *EXAMPLES OF WHAT TO ASK:*

- *What do you like most about working here?*
- *What are you looking forward to?*
- *What would you say is one of your defining moments?*
- *What kind of job or career path for your future would most please you?*
- *Who is someone that you really admire, and why?*
- *How can I best help you?*