

Do you Earn or Demand Respect

When I was in my early teen-years, my brother, who is 9 years my elder, got sent to prison for selling drugs. While he was serving a 2-year prison sentence, he joined a prison gang. He was taught the gang's principles and laws. One of those laws was, you never disrespect the gang as a whole; in conjunction with that, you never allow yourself to be disrespected, but rather you demand respect. When he was released, that was his mind set...“Never allow disrespect.”

On one particularly frustrating day as a teenager, my brother called me and I gave him attitude and hung up on him. Five minutes after I hung up the phone, there was a knock at the door and I answered it. My brother was on the other side. I was immediately met with a punch to my chest. It knocked me on my back and he said, “Never hang up on me or disrespect me ever again,” and left. My brother instilled fear in me in that moment and for many years I carried that fear. I was afraid of saying or doing the wrong thing. He had my respect based on that fear.

My brother quickly rose through the ranks of the gang because he was willing to do whatever the leaders asked of him (i.e. sell drugs, racketeer, prostitution, armed robbery, murder, etc.). After a short while, he began calling a great deal of the shots as a leader in the street-side of the prison gang. When he gave an order, people did it out of fear for their own life. They feared that if they did not follow through, they would be killed. In this way he demanded respect.

Eventually, my brother and several other gang members were caught and were indicted on several counts, including three murders. They were facing the death penalty. And since self-preservation usually wins out, my brother, and a few others, turned state evidence against the leadership of the gang. My brother's sentence was lessened from the death-penalty to 25 to life for his involvement with the gang. He served 22 years of that sentence before being released.

There was time when I was a young man that I wanted to be my brother. I wanted the respect that he had. He showed no fear, no remorse. He didn't care who was in his way to getting what he wanted. During the over two decades he spent in prison, I learned the other side of respect. The side that has love and admiration, a following of people who are cheering you on and will do anything you ask of them because they know that you believe in them. Respect that when you walk into a room faces light up because your presence alone motivates them. That is the type of respect I have come to yearn for. There is quote that I recently heard, “People follow people, not titles”(Ty Bennett). Just because I hold the title of Father, doesn't mean I automatically have the respect of my children. That respect is earned by spending time with them and getting to know them individually. Just because I am a top sales person in an organization, doesn't mean I am entitled to treat co-workers as less, or beneath me. Once I have come to the top, my responsibility is to bring others up with me. Just because I am the owner of an organization, doesn't mean that people want to follow me. I show that I am worth following by showing them that their success in my organization matters.

A few months ago, my uncle passed away, and my aunt asked me to officiate at the funeral. My brother got permission from his patrol officer, and was able return to Utah and attend the funeral. This was the first time our extended Salazar family had seen him in nearly 30 years. When he arrived he was welcomed with a great deal love. As he reminisced with family, he was also able to observe how I interacted with family and friends. He watch how they depended and trusted me to be the leader of the funeral, not because they feared me, or because it was my right, but because they felt loved and appreciated by me. My brother thought about these differences as he drove home to California. He sent me a text a few days later, telling me that he wants to be respected out of love, not fear and that my example as\ leader is what he wanted.

What type of respect do you have

Are you one who demands respect or are one that has earned respect? In other words are you feared or are you loved?