



STUDENT GUIDE · GRADES 9-12

# "Let's Talk Respect"

*Everybody is that person to someone.*

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**This one is yours.** Nobody grades it and nobody collects it.

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# The card

In the assembly, a stack of cards went around with strangers' names on them. Sarah. Emma. Ari. Jim. Carly. Will. Amelia. Emmett.

**You didn't care.** Why would you?

Then one person wrote down the name of somebody they would protect — somebody where, if you heard what was being said about them, you'd get angry — and that card turned up alone in a sealed glass case.

**Everybody is that person to someone.**

So treat others as you would want **that person** treated. Not even just yourself.

## Your card

Write the name, or just the initials, of one person you would protect. **Nobody is going to ask you who it is.**

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Now answer these in your head, with that name in front of you.

- If the worst thing you've seen said about somebody online got said about this person, how would you feel?
  - Would you want to know about it?
  - Would you do something?
  - **Everybody on that stack of stranger cards is on somebody else's card right now.** Does that change anything, honestly?
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## Whose card are you?

**Who would write your name on their card?** Not who you wish — who actually would.

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**If that person saw everything you posted and said this week, what would they think?**

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# Your lens

Every decision you make comes out of what you know. And what you know comes from three places:

|                            |                                                       |
|----------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Formal education</b>    | school, what you've been taught, what you've read     |
| <b>Personal experience</b> | what has actually happened to you                     |
| <b>Outside influence</b>   | family, friends, what you scroll past, the crazy aunt |

**Nobody else on earth has the same three.**

So when you look at something somebody did and think *"I would never do that"* — you're judging their decision with information they don't have, about a situation you were never in.

Does that mean you're wrong? Not necessarily. Does it mean they are? Not necessarily. But there is only one door into somebody else's shoes:

**You can only get there by asking questions.**

## The part about you

You do this to yourself too. You take whatever you were born into, or a label somebody else handed you, and you accept it.

*"Once you think you're something, then I'm gonna act to live up to that."*

**One label you've accepted about yourself:**

**Where did it come from? Who gave it to you?**

**Is it true?**

**What have you done because of it that you wouldn't have done otherwise?**

# Rewrite one judgment

Something somebody did that made you think "I would never." No names.

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Now three different things that could be true about them that would make it make sense. Three, not one — one is easy and one is usually wrong.

1.

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2.

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3.

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Turn it into a real question you could ask them. Not a trap question. One you'd actually want the answer to.

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# Your choice

You wake up in a bad mood, and your brain — which is good at its job — **goes looking to validate it**. It hunts for the negative, because that's what you told it to expect. It builds all day. And eventually somebody says something and you snap at them, because you needed the release.

It runs the other way too. Somebody says "*you look great today*" and your first thought is "**they don't mean it.**"

**You can train it the other way.** The default is negative. That's the thing to fight.

*"In life there's gonna be times that you have to do things that you don't wanna do. So you have two options. You can go there with a good attitude or you can go there with a bad attitude.*

**Your choice."**

Here's the honest version, and it matters: **you don't choose the feeling. You choose what you do with it.**

## Three good things, seven days

Every day, three things that went right. From that day. Small counts — the whole point is making your brain hunt in the other direction.

### Three things that went right

Day 1

Day 2

Day 3

Day 4

Day 5

Day 6

Day 7

**Did it get easier or harder to find three? What happened around day four?**

**Did you notice anything during the day because you knew you'd be writing it down later?**

*That last question is the real one.*

# Win, or learn

The goal of a conversation is to listen and learn. The goal of a debate is to win.

Asked whether you'd rather win or learn, most people say **both**. You can't — to learn, you have to be willing to lose, and nobody wants to lose.

Think about something you've competed in. Did you learn more when you won, or when you lost? **You learn by failing**. Winning only confirms what you already thought.

And being wrong feels terrible — but notice what actually happened. You weren't just wrong. **You were wrong the whole time**. This is only the moment you found out.

## The rope

Throw somebody one end of a rope and pull. **They pull back** — every time, without being told. Push, and people push back. That's not a character flaw, it's a reflex, and it's why *"you're wrong"* never works even when you are right.

"You're wrong."

They defend themselves. Nothing gets through.

"That's the traditional way — here's another way I heard..."

Same information. Now they're listening.

Choose your words so people can actually learn from you.

And when somebody sees four where you see three, one move works: **go over to their side**. *"Wait — I see three. You see four? How?"* Then shut up and listen.

## One real conversation

Have one conversation this week with somebody who sees something differently — going in to **learn**, not to win.

The question I'm going to open with:

What was the disagreement?

What did they say that I didn't know? Did your view move — or theirs?

# You don't see the hurt

In the assembly, two people stood facing each other. One closed her eyes. Robert tapped the one whose eyes were **open** — and the one with her eyes closed felt it, on the same shoulder.

*"Sticks and stones may break your bones, words will never hurt you."*

**That phrase came before the internet.** Back when all they had was sticks and stones.

Just because you don't physically touch somebody doesn't mean they're not going to feel it.

Roasting goes too far sometimes. In person you know how — **the person's crying.** Online? **You don't.**

That's the whole gap. What makes it easy online is exactly what makes it dangerous. You don't know what that person is going through, so it costs you nothing to say — and it can land far harder than you meant. **The biggest danger is that you never see the reaction.**

## Golden Rule 2.0

**Post about others as you'd want posted about you — and about the people you care about.**

The test is one question: **would I want this on a billboard for everybody to see?**

No? Then don't send it to somebody else.

## The billboard audit

Scroll back through your own messages, posts, comments and group chats from the last week. Yours, nobody else's. **Nobody is collecting this.**

**Roughly how many would pass the billboard test?**

**Find one that wouldn't. What would you send instead?** Don't post the fix — just write it.

**Find one where you never saw the reaction. What do you think it actually was?**

**One line you'd take back.** You don't have to explain it to anyone.

# Keeping your power

Bullying runs on an imbalance of power. So how does somebody get that power from you?

**You hand it over — with the reaction.**

Anyone with a brother or sister already knows this. *"I'm not touching you."* — *"Stop it."* — *"Okay."* — *"MOM."* That's the win. You know exactly which buttons to push, and so do they.

So don't hand it over:

| They say            | You say                                                                                  |
|---------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| "You're bald."      | "You're totally right. I am. You've got a nice head of hair, styled all different ways." |
| "You're so stupid." | "I know, right? That's why I'm in school — trying to get smarter."                       |
| "You're ugly."      | "I know. This awkward stage is lasting forever."                                         |
| "You're an idiot."  | "Nailed it." Or just a thumbs up.                                                        |

**You don't have to believe a word of it.** The point isn't to feel good about being called ugly. The point is that the fight needed two people and only one showed up.

*"Why would I care about somebody whose opinion I wouldn't even ask for?"*

**I'm not going to hold what you think about me over what I think about myself.**

## My three

Three things somebody might say to you, and a calm answer you could actually say out loud. In your words — not the ones from the table.

| They say | I'd say |
|----------|---------|
|          |         |
|          |         |
|          |         |

**And the one time I'd go get an adult instead:**

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# What's your defense?

Somebody says something in the hallway. You answer back. They step closer. Somebody films it. You swing, or you take him down. He lands badly.

**Brain bleed.**

*Who's liable? You. Who has serious problems now? You.*

*And what's your defense — "he said I was bald"?*

*"And I'm gonna give up all of my freedoms and everything else for that?" **That's ego.***

**First defense: your legs.** *"You're totally right. My bad." Turn and go.*

**Second: your words.** *"Stop. I don't want to do this."*

Physical force is for when you genuinely can't leave and somebody has hold of you.

## Ten seconds

If you see it happening, you are the one who can actually do something. You can **tell somebody. Step in. Not laugh. Support the person being targeted.**

And if you say something, it **typically stops within ten seconds.**

So why don't we?

- *If I say something, they might start targeting me.*
- *It was done to me, so it's fine for it to be done to somebody else.*
- *It's always been this way. Nothing's ever going to change.*

**And to that, bananas.**

Everybody opens a banana from the stem. We're the only primates who do — every other one turns it over and pinches the bottom, which is easier, skips the black seed thing, and leaves you a handle. So why do we do it the hard way?

**Because whoever taught you did it that way.** All the way down the line to you.

Just because it's the way it's always been done **doesn't mean it's the best way.**

The only way to change it is **action and education.**

## If you do step in

- **Stay calm.** In a shouting match nobody is listening — you're both waiting for your turn. Talking *quieter* brings it down.
- **Allow space.** Stand at an angle, not squared up. **Hands out.**

- **Never turn your back.** Don't point. Don't stare anybody down.
- **Ask why.** *"This person's really upset — what's happening?"* Then offer something else that would solve it.

## My line

The thing you'd actually say walking into something. Not a speech — short, low-stakes, easy to say. *"Hey, what's going on?"* · *"Yo, come on, let's go."* · *"You good?"*

**Write it down now, so it exists before you need it.**

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## Four people

Four people you'd actually go to if something was happening — to you, or to somebody you know. **At least two adults. At least one in this building.**

| Who | Where I'd find them |
|-----|---------------------|
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|     |                     |
|     |                     |
|     |                     |



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# Six sentences

*Everybody is that person to someone.*

Be curious, not judgmental.

The goal of a conversation is to listen and learn.

The goal of a debate is to win.

Put it down. Calm down. Then go talk.

You don't see the hurt. You don't see the reaction.

Just because it's the way it's always been done  
doesn't mean it's the best way.