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## **Got Respect? By Eve Sullivan**

We all need it and we don't get enough of it. Not sleep. Not calcium. Although we probably get too little of either. I'm talking about respect.

My good friend the dictionary gives three definitions: a feeling of regard or esteem, a willingness to show consideration or appreciation, and the state of being well regarded. A hat trick! So, respect is a feeling one person has and shows to another person who then feels respected.

Is there a minimum daily requirement of respect? I have never seen it listed and you certainly can't buy respect at the pharmacy. Is that why we ignore its importance in our lives? Perhaps those of us who lived through the sixties -- when authority was questioned at every turn -- ended up throwing the baby out with the bathwater. Respect has to be for, not against, something or somebody.

We show, or should show, respect to others, as human beings. We show special respect to some people because of their position (teachers, officials, bosses) or because of their advanced age and presumed wisdom. We need to show respect as well for people who are younger or very elderly, perhaps weaker, and for those whose disabilities create special needs. We should show respect, too, for animals and plants ("our animal and plant relatives," as a Native American writer called them), for our environment, both the natural environment and the built environment.

But where is respect learned and how is it taught? My guess is that it is best learned from the inside out. If we respect our children they will know how wonderful it feels to be respected, considered, and appreciated. We have the right as parents to be respected by our children, but if we demand it from them in disrespectful ways, we are sending them a terribly mixed message. Do parents receive enough respect? I think not. If we don't get this essential emotional, spiritual and moral nourishment, we have a difficult time giving it.

If parents were more respected in society -- in all sorts of ways, practical and spiritual -- we would be better able to give our children the care and consideration they need, along with all the other stuff kids need: food, clothing, and shelter, medical care and education, books and toys, trips to the park. If we received more respect we would have more energy to advocate for our children's and our families' needs.

As you turn off the television an hour earlier in order to get more sleep, and as you add broccoli and dried fruits to your grocery list (good sources of calcium for everyone,

especially those who are lactose-intolerant), remember to put more RESPECT into your daily diet. You can do it three ways:

1. Feel respect more on the inside: think often of people in your life whom you hold in high regard.
2. Let it show: tell the people you admire that you think highly of them.
3. Let yourself feel the respect of others in your life. If your days are too full of disrespect, ask a trusted friend to remind you why they like you! Gently, respectfully, ask others to treat you as you would like to be treated.

Maybe chronic disrespect, like sleep deprivation or calcium deficiency, has delayed effects. But sooner or later -- and later looks like now to me -- we suffer disrespect as individuals, in our relationships, and in society at large. It will take time to rebuild our reserves of this vital emotional and spiritual element. Let's begin on August 1st, Respect for Parents Day.

*This column first appeared in the Cambridge (Massachusetts) CHRONICLE, on July 22, 1999, when PARENTS FORUM welcomed the Founder of Respect for Parents Day, Marilyn Dalrymple at America's Night Out on August 3, 1999 at Rindge Field, Cambridge, and is posted with permission of the author.*