



# HELPS

Health Enhancement for Lifelong Professional Students Newsletter

## Your Professional Image: Secrets of the Unwritten Rules

An advanced degree can put your career in the fast lane. Yet you can bring your career prospects to a screeching halt if you haven't mastered some of the skills expected in a professional environment.

"Only 15% of your success is based on your education and skill," says Mary Lee Kennedy, founder and president of Houston-based MannersPro. "The

other 85% is based on your people skills."

As she helps college students, young adults, professionals and ESL students learn those people skills, Kennedy emphasizes manners.

"Having good manners is not about which fork to use," she explains. "It is all about making other people feel more comfortable around you. You can do that

by behaving in a predictable way, and by treating everyone equally and with respect. One good way to learn the unwritten rules of professional behavior is to observe successful professionals and find one to mentor you."

### Avoid self-sabotage

First impressions are important whether you're meeting professors, employers or colleagues. While the way you dress can influence how someone sizes you up, it's often the way you behave that creates a more lasting positive or negative impression.

Baby boomer and businessman Barry Foster spends a considerable amount of time on college campuses. "I tend to be conservative in my appearance, wearing a tie and jacket and carrying a briefcase," says the director and founder of the Corporate Coaching Center in St. Petersburg.

"The young adults who act and speak to me as though I was one of their long-time, millennial buddies 'sabotage' their initial impression with me. I'm very open and fully appreciate the youth of today; however, it's very hard to get a second chance

to make a first impression. How do I decide whether or not to take them seriously? It's not how they're 'packaged'—it's how I'm treated."

### Observe others' styles

Seek to understand other people's personality styles and preferences, then respond in-kind, recommends Michele Norris, president of Navigen Leadership, LLC in Tampa. "For example, learn what modes of communication people prefer, whether that's in-person, phone, voice mail, email or text message. Then respect that preference."

"We all see the world through our own filter and view others in our own image," Foster adds. "Be aware of others' styles, mannerisms, speech, attire, conversational speed, words and phrases."

*Continued on page 2*

### Etiquette Q & A

**Q: Whose name is mentioned first in an introduction?**

A: The person you are honoring or the eldest, highest ranking official.

**Q: What is the correct response to *thank you*?**

A: *You're welcome.*

**Q: Is email always appropriate?**

A: No. There are times when a handwritten note will make all the difference.

**Q: If you're stuck with a "boring" individual at a party, what should you do?**

A: Introduce them to someone else.

**Q: If served appetizers from a server's tray, how many should you take?**

A: One if you have a napkin, two if you have a plate.

**Q: What would you do if your nose starting running during dinner?**

A: Use a tissue or handkerchief, never the napkin.

**Q: If you drop a utensil on the floor in a restaurant, should you pick it up?**

A: No.

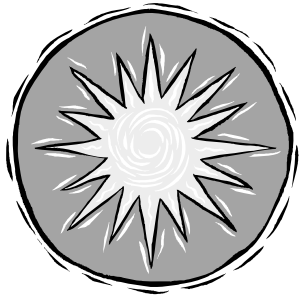
**Q: In a restaurant, how can you tell when a dinner meeting is over?**

A: When the corporate host asks for the check or crumples up their napkin.

*Excerpted with permission from [www.mannerspro.com](http://www.mannerspro.com)*

***We want you to thrive, not just survive, at USF***

*The Health Enhancement for Lifelong Professional Students program can assist when you're not sure where to turn. HELPS is available for you 24/7: 813-870-0184*



**HELPS 24-hour  
phone line:  
813-870-0184**

HELPS is administered by:

Gary L. Wood & Associates, P.A.  
4700 North Habana Ave.  
Suite 300  
Tampa, Florida 33614

## *Polish Your Professional Image*

*Continued from page 1*

“You can show genuine appreciation for others by emulating many of the signals you are receiving,” Foster says. “If someone speaks slowly, don’t talk to them at Mach 2—slow down. If someone needs some time to process what you’ve said, give them time to think before moving on with the conversation. If someone is very animated in their gestures, you can be a bit animated as well. If their gestures are more subdued, keep your gestures subdued.”

“People tend trust others who are much like them,” Foster continues. “Always try to understand and appreciate where the other person is coming from.”

### What did you just say?

Foster and Norris, both members of the Tampa Bay Area Professional Coaches Association, say there are a few verbal gaffes they like to

help people avoid.

Norris had one associate who frequently called her ‘dude,’ which she thought was inappropriate. “It is acceptable on the college campus, but not in the boardroom,” she says.

Proper English, not slang and text-speech, will make a far better impression.

“Save the latest jargon, descriptors and verbal shortcuts for your informal discussions with friends,” says Foster. “When you use terms like OMG, TMI, and BFF, and overuse the word ‘like’ in every sentence, you show a lack of professional command over your speech and a lack of respect.”

### Be present

If you expect to be treated with respect, pay attention.

For example, you may consider your smart phone a necessary appendage, but

professors and employers may not appreciate this.

“You may be adept at multi-tasking, and able to follow a conversation while texting,” Norris says. “However, this is interpreted as inconsiderate and rude when you’re face-to-face with someone or sitting in their classroom. So resist the temptation to be connected 100 percent of the time. Stay present in the current interaction.”

Some of the very most effective ways of showing respect are to always be prepared and on-time and to demonstrate attentive, present listening,” advises Norris.

### Resources

- [www.mannerspro.com](http://www.mannerspro.com)
- [www.navigenleadership.com](http://www.navigenleadership.com)
- [www.everyoneneedsacoach.com](http://www.everyoneneedsacoach.com)
- Tampa Bay Professional Coaches Association [www.tbpc.com](http://www.tbpc.com)
- *The Etiquette Edge: Unspoken Rules for Business Success*, by Beverly Y. Langford, AMACOM, New York, NY (2005)

## *Why Adults Need to Play*

What do you do, just for fun? Play time isn’t just for children. Adults need time to relax, laugh, let go of worries and let creativity flow. Doing something completely unrelated to school or work is the key. Give yourself ‘recess’ time for healthy play and you’ll be more stress-proof.

“We work to make money. We play to enjoy life,” says USF alumna Beth S. Miller, Communication Gardener. “From the time my husband and I married, we’ve made up our own games for car rides, the dinner table and to get through tough times.”

“While we don’t necessarily schedule play, it always finds its way into our day,” says Miller. “We recently bought a small fishing boat, strictly for play. We’ve had some adventures with it. Like not taking the straps off the boat to get it off the trailer. Or passing up 15 bait shops before picking the one boat ramp with none. And then finally getting the boat into the water on the first try, only to have the steering go out. Still, we always find things to laugh about.”

Need to pump a little more fun into your frantic life? These books will get the ideas flowing.

- *301 Ways to Have Fun at Work*, by Dave Hemsath and Leslie Yerkes, Berrett-Koehler Publishers, San Francisco, CA (1997)
- *Work Like Your Dog: Fifty Ways to Work Less, Play More and Earn More*, by Matt Weinstein and Luke Barber, Villard Books, a division of Random House, New York, NY (1999)
- *Beyond Love and Work: Why Adults Need to Play* by Lenore Terr, M.D., Touchstone, New York, NY (1999)