

THE ELEVENTH RULE OF LIFE

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Rule 11 from Bill Gates to teenagers:

'Be nice to nerds. Chances are you'll end up working for one!'

What is a nerd? The dictionary says a 'nerd' is ...'a foolish, inept, or unattractive person; a person who is single-minded or accomplished in scientific or technical pursuits but socially inept; or a stupid, irritating, ineffectual person.' Clearly a 'nerd' does not fit into the mold that society deems normal but why should they become a target just because they are different? From the beginning of time, it seems people are picked on because they are not like everyone else.

Our society does not value education as highly as many other countries do. In the case of the scholarly student, an intelligent child who may have poor social skills, other students can be so cruel to them. The 'nerd' has often not found it easy relating to others or been interested in the more social and physical recreational pursuits. When coupled with our set of values that say you have value if you are good-looking, athletic, moneyed, and social a 'nerd' may stand out like a sore thumb.

I would suggest that envy may not be the basis of harassment as some people would declare. Our kids often see 'nerds' as targets for ridicule rather than people to be jealous of. In my 40 plus years of being a teacher and school administrator I have seen 'nerds' being picked on and so many able children deliberately not trying for high grades because they don't want to be mocked by their peers.

I am sure we can all think of times past when we have been singled out, have felt desperately lonely or have 'died an inner death' from not being accepted. Kids want friends beyond all else and what their friends think often dictates how they act – all in the name of acceptance.

We need to teach our children to celebrate differences, and not try to push everyone around them into some imaginary mold. Over the last few years we have been horrified by school shootings. Kids just explode with a torrent of aggression for no apparent reason. It has been found that they have usually been harboring resentment over some injustice in their lives and the results are unspeakable.

If we hear our child ridiculing another child, then this must stop. Don't let them start being mean-mouthed. Teach them about respect and what respect looks like. For example, being respectful means being kind and saying only kind things about others including our brothers and sisters.

Everyone has value and everyone needs to know they have value. God doesn't make 'junk'. He has got a specific purpose for everyone He has created. Include 'nerds' in your friendships so kids can see that you are demonstrating specifically what you believe and want them to do. Learning to tolerate and appreciate other's differences will help significantly in the workplace. As Bill Gates said, "They might be your boss one day!" "Oh, blessed revenge!" they might say.

If you have any comments or questions on this subject, please do not hesitate to contact us at sally@forefrontfamilies.org. We invite you to also check out our website at www.forefrontfamilies.org and our blog site at www.forefrontfamilies.blogspot.com for further assistance.