

# The Power of Politeness

By: Kyle Fisher

July 17, 2017



Most of us were raised by our parents to say “please” and “thank you.” In today’s society, these simple words seem to be used less and less. Worryingly, this trend includes the country’s political discourse which has become increasingly harsh and insensitive.

This lack of civility overlooks the power of these magic words. Saying “please” makes a respectful request of the other person and empowers that person to respond to your request. Studies show that using the word makes it much more likely that your request will be granted. More fundamentally, it demonstrates a basic recognition of the human dignity of the other person.

Saying “thank you” is the simplest form of practicing gratitude. It helps prevent the other person from feeling under-appreciated and taken for granted. Like with saying “please,” studies show that saying “thank you” makes people more willing to do something for you again in the future.

This creates a cycle of good will which can be very powerful. Indeed, in at least one extreme situation, it made the difference between life and death.

During a polar expedition between 1914 to 1916, an Englishman, Ernest Shackleton, and his crew became trapped in the ice on their boat. Months went by and the ice still held. Eventually, the pressure of the ice crushed the hull of the ship and left the men trapped on the ice. Their epic adventure to survive was only beginning. It is an inspiring story. I apologize for ruining the ending, but everyone made it home safely, which is my point.

Shackleton proved himself to be an amazing leader in many respects. However, one trait in particular kept the group cohesive. He was always polite to the men and expected them to be polite to each other as well. The social lubricant that this created helped keep the men civil to and cooperative with each other, which literally saved their lives.

This is an obviously extreme example, but our ability to sincerely say “please” and “thank you” has a dramatic and beneficial impact on how we relate to each other. Besides, it will make your parents proud of you!

Thank you for reading my submission. I appreciate it.