

PARENTS WITH PREPAREDNESS

Good Manners Matter

How Small Acts of Courtesy Create an Upward Spiral of Behavior.

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create an upward spiral of behavior.*

"You're only as cool as you treat people."

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Jim Robell

With special thanks and sincere appreciation to Carter Gray

James “Jim” Robell is President and Chief Executive Officer, Chairman of the Board of Fortior Solutions. He joined Fortior Solutions in 2002 after serving 19 years at Intel Corporation. He was promoted to President and Chief Operating Officer in 2005 after having served three years as the company’s Vice President of Marketing, where he created the RAPIDGate® and RAPID-RCx® brands. In 2017, the board unanimously appointed Jim to the position of President and Chief Executive Officer, and in 2018, he was unanimously made Chairman of the Board. Fortior Solutions has helped protect more than 150 United States military facilities and processed more than 1 million people through the RAPIDGate program. The RAPID-RCx

program has scanned more than 500 million credentials. Together these programs have accurately and securely identified more than 50,000 people trying to enter military and critical infrastructure facilities with unsuitable backgrounds, forged or expired credentials, and assumed identities. In March 2020, Jim was featured on the cover of *Enterprise Security*, and in 2025 he and three others were awarded U.S. Patent # 12,417,449 titled, “Technologies for creating and transferring non-fungible token-based identities”.

Prior to his tenure at Fortior Solutions, Jim was an executive at Intel Corporation serving in a variety of roles including technical, sales and marketing positions. Notably, he founded and served as Director of Intel's worldwide Application Design-in Centers, Worldwide Intel Customer Support, Worldwide Crisis Management, the Y2K rollover and the Worldwide Intel Architecture Sales Campaign. Several of his technical articles have been published in Intel publications and he has been a keynote speaker in several capacities. Jim's technical background strengths include active radio frequency identification, mainframe architecture, microprocessor, microcontroller, development tools, embedded and proprietary networked operating systems

Jim has received numerous awards throughout his career, and in 2017 he was honored on behalf of SureID, with the prestigious “*Semper Fidelis*” award from the Marine Corps Scholarship Foundation. Jim currently sits on various boards, holds various clearances, is certified in Best Practices for Anti-Terrorism Security by the Department of Homeland Security, is an authorized user of Chemical-terrorism Vulnerability Information by the Department of Homeland Security and has significant experience working with members of Congress, their staffs and lobbyists. Jim has also been a keynote speaker during the Central Intelligence Agency's industry day. In 2015, he was recognized by Dr. Reginald Brothers, Under Secretary of the Department of Homeland Security for Science and Technology as a Subject Matter Expert for the Passenger Screening Recommendations Task Force and served on the respective industry panel. In 2024, Jim was nominated for the Homeland Security Today Hero Awards, Homeland Security Person of the Year – National. He has also served as a member of the Governor's Economic Development delegation for North Dakota in partnership with Norway.

Jim has received several recognitions for his work with youth sports and the Camp Pendleton Armed Services YMCA. He also has been a strong supporter of a number of charities including the Susan G. Komen® Race for the Cure, the Make-A-Wish Foundation® and Washington County Kids (WCK).

CHAPTER 1 — The Principles Behind Good Manners

Good manners are not a performance. They are not reserved for special occasions, impressive company, or situations where someone is watching. They are a reflection of who you are, and of the world you are choosing to build, one interaction at a time.

The principles below are not a rulebook. They are a foundation. When you understand why good manners matter, the specific behaviors follow naturally.

You're Only as Cool as You Treat People

Any other measurement of a person's worth — title, wealth, fame, social status is ultimately a meaningless measurement. How you treat others is the only one that holds up over time. If you treat others inappropriately, you will be judged accordingly, and rightly so.



"You're only as cool as you treat people."

There Are No Unimportant People

Position, rank, fame, and financial standing are real in the world, but they are not a measure of a person's worth. Everyone matters. Everyone has the capacity to make the world a better place. When you treat everyone as important, you are not being naive. You are being accurate.



In practice: Greet the person who holds the door the same way you would greet the CEO in the room.

Do Unto Others as You Would Have Them Do Unto Your Children

This is a more useful version of the golden rule because it makes the stakes immediate and personal. When a child makes a mistake, most parents want them corrected and taught, not humiliated. When you extend that same patience to others, you are not lowering your standards. You are raising them.

The world gives you more teachable moments than you can count. Take them. With patience, not irritation.

Good Manners Show Respect for Others

In its simplest form, good manners mean that you care about others and that you are treating them respectfully. That is the whole thing. Every specific behavior in this guide flows from that principle.

*"Respect for ourselves guides our morals; respect for others guides our manners."
— Laurence Sterne"*

A Person Is Never Stronger Than When They Help Someone Weaker

This is the engine behind the upward spiral. When a strong person helps someone weaker — holds the door, gives up their seat, makes room others always see it. And they mimic it. Especially the young. What looks like a small act creates a ripple that reaches further than you will ever know.



The upward spiral: One act of genuine courtesy is observed. It is repeated. Others repeat it. The culture shifts.

Never Mistake Kindness for Weakness

Good manners can look like weakness to people who do not understand the foundation behind them. They are not. Patience requires strength. Graciousness requires confidence. Helping someone else requires having enough — enough security, enough self-possession to give something away.

Once people observe these behaviors in someone they respect, they quickly realize that the kindest people in the room are often the strongest ones.

Good Manners Are Usually Free

Most acts of good manners cost nothing but attention. They do not require money, status, or special circumstances. They require only awareness — an awareness that other people are present, that they matter, and that small acts of consideration have large effects.

CHAPTER 2 — Putting It Into Practice

Good manners are not abstract. They show up in specific moments at doors, in meetings, at tables, in email inboxes. The examples below are a starting point, a set of moments where the principles above become visible.

Doors — and the Simple Power of Holding One

Opening or holding a door for someone is one of the most universally understood gestures of courtesy. It says: I see you. I have a moment. You go first.

A strong person can do this for another strong person just as easily as for someone more fragile. The person who receives that open door appreciates it. They will likely repeat the behavior. And those watching especially the young will almost certainly do the same.

Standing When Someone Enters or Leaves

Standing when a person enters a meeting or arrives at a meal is a gesture of respect that communicates: the person who just walked in matters — regardless of their role, their rank, or whether you know them.

The same applies when someone leaves. Standing as a person exits signals that their presence was valued, not just their contribution to the agenda. Others at the table will notice, and they will be more likely to do the same.

Greeting Everyone in the Room

When you walk into a meeting or sit down at a meal, greet every person present not just the person you came to see. A handshake, a name, and eye contact repeated around a room tells everyone present who you are.

Arriving on Time

| *"Punctuality is the politeness of kings. — Louis XVIII"*

When you arrive on time, you communicate that you value the time of everyone else in the room that their schedules, their preparation, and their presence matter to you. Habitual lateness communicates the opposite, regardless of intent.

The Meeting Invitation That Sets the Tone

When you send a meeting invitation, consider adding a brief message: why you are looking forward to this meeting and what you hope to accomplish. It helps the recipient prepare and signals from the first interaction that you are organized, intentional, and glad they said yes.

 **A small addition, a lasting impression:** Two sentences in an invitation can change the entire tone of what follows.

The Thank You Message After the Meeting

A brief follow-up message such as thanking the person for their time and recapping the outstanding actions and next steps signals that you were present, paying attention, and that you follow through. This is rare enough that it stands out every time.

Offering Your Seat

If someone near you appears more frail, more burdened, or simply more in need of a seat, offer yours. Do not wait for the perfect moment. The offer itself is the point and everyone who witnesses it will be more likely to do the same.

Ordering Thoughtfully When Someone Else Is Buying

When someone has offered to pay for a meal, order thoughtfully. Do not order the most expensive item, that can read as taking advantage of generosity. But do not order the cheapest item either, unless you genuinely want it, doing so can embarrass the host. Order something moderate. Something you would enjoy. That is the whole of it.

Patience and Respect for Service Workers

 *"You can tell a lot about a person by the way they treat people who can do nothing for them. — Malcolm Forbes"*

How you treat people who are serving you in restaurants, at counters, on phone calls is one of the most honest tests of your character. It is easy to be gracious when the stakes are high and the audience is impressive. It is much harder, and much more revealing, when neither is true.

 **People are always watching:** How you behave when you think it doesn't matter is exactly when it matters most.

CHAPTER 3 — The Four Tests

These four tests are quick, and most can be run in seconds. They are designed to give you a check on your instincts before you act.

Test 1: What If Everyone Did This?

Ask yourself: if everyone in this situation acted the way I am about to act, would the world be a better place? If the answer is yes, proceed. If the answer is no, reconsider.

Test 2: Would the People Who Know Me Best Be Proud?

| *"Character is doing the right thing when nobody's looking. — J.C. Watts"*

Imagine your parents, grandparents, spouse, children, or closest friends could see exactly what you are doing and why. Would you be proud of what they see? This test is particularly useful for borderline moments — situations where you could justify either path.

Test 3: Will I Be Glad I Did This?

When you look back on this moment tonight, next year, at the end of a long life will you be glad you acted this way? Most people regret the times they were unkind more than they regret the times they were too generous.

Test 4: Could This Insult the Other Person?

Before you act, ask: could this reasonably be read as disrespectful or dismissive by the person on the receiving end? Take a moment to consider their perspective which is, in many ways, the entire point of good manners.



Run the tests quickly — not anxiously. The goal is awareness, not paralysis. Four questions, a few seconds, a better decision.

CHAPTER 4 — "But No Good Deed Goes Unpunished"

It is a familiar joke and occasionally, it absolutely feels true. Sometimes you hold the door, and nobody notices. Sometimes a genuine act of kindness is received with indifference. That is not a reason to stop.

Good Deeds and Good Manners Are Not the Same Thing

A good deed is a significant act, one that involves real cost, real effort, real sacrifice. Good manners are something more modest: small, repeated acts of consideration woven into everyday life. The risk of offense is much lower with good manners than with good deeds.

The Four Tests Protect You

If you run these four tests — especially the last one, and stay within the examples in this guide, the likelihood of your good manners being received badly is genuinely rare.

And that rare outcome is significantly outweighed by the likelihood of the opposite: your behavior is noticed, appreciated, repeated, and added to an upward spiral of behavior that extends far beyond the room you are standing in.

Do the Right Thing Because It Is the Right Thing

The most reliable motivation for good manners is the simplest one: because it is right. Not because it will be noticed. Not because it will be rewarded. Not because someone is watching. Because it reflects who you are. Because other people matter.

| *"Do the right thing, because it is the right thing to do."*

The Upward Spiral Starts With You

Good manners are not a relic. They are a daily practice of noticing other people and choosing, in small and consistent ways, to treat them well.

What makes them powerful is not any single act, it is the accumulation of acts, observed by others, repeated, modeled for the young, and woven gradually into the culture of every environment they touch.

You do not need a title or a platform or an audience. You need a door to hold. A name to use. A chair to offer. A thank you to send.

| *"No act of kindness, no matter how small, is ever wasted. — Aesop"*

Start there. The spiral takes care of the rest.

Parents With Preparedness

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