Respect Is Shown by Clothing

The View in the Mirror.

You are about to go for an important job interview. You want the job so much you can almost taste it. You know you have the qualifications, and you know you can do the job well. The pay is good, and the hours fit your needs perfectly. It’s a good career move, too.

Before leaving for that important interview, what do you do?

You look in the mirror!

Why do you do that? You do it because you know that the way you dress is important. The way you dress sends a message to the interviewer. It will be very much a part of the decision as to whether or not you will be hired.

Few stop to consider how clothing can show respect or disrespect.

But it does!

Look at these examples:

Courtroom Decorum

Courtroom decorum is a way of maintaining dignity in a courtroom. Much of it is geared to show respect to the judge, and is insisted upon by good judges.

Talk about courtroom decorum with a judge or attorney in your community. If you are teaching this lesson to a class, invite that person to speak before the class. If you cannot interact personally with such a person, research the subject on the Internet. Your object is to learn how respect enters into courtroom decorum: specifically, what part clothing has in courtroom decorum.

You will hear or read statements such as these, quoted directly from online court sites:

- A male attorney appearing in Court should be dressed with a coat, shirt, and necktie. A female attorney should wear comparable conservative attire.
• Persons in the courtroom must be dressed in appropriate courtroom attire. This means the best business attire that you have at your disposal. Gentlemen should, if available, wear dress-collared shirt, tie, slacks, belt, and suit jacket. Ladies should, if available, wear business dress, business dress suit, or business dress pants suit. Students may wear school uniforms or other appropriate courtroom attire as instructed by your supervising faculty sponsor.

• Counselors (primarily, but not exclusively, those on the criminal court side), please make sure your clients show up with proper attire. The rules briefly are (as you well know):
  
  o No logo advertising t-shirts (Polo and the like with subtle emblems are OK). The target is the football sweatshirt, rock band pictures, Harley shirts and the like.
  o No hats.
  o No sunglasses inside unless by doctor's prescription.
  o Shirts tucked into pants (men).
  o All clothing clean.

Your clients who show up otherwise will either be sent home to change, and if not returning by the time their case is called, will be subject to forfeiture of bond; or, bond may immediately be forfeited, and your client incarcerated if the court has concern about flight at that point.

Courts are serious about respect shown by clothing!

You may want to record for your students portions of real-life TV court, especially cases in which the judge makes clear mention of the clothing worn by the participants in the case.

If possible, take your students to a court to observe, being certain ahead of time that all students will be wearing appropriate, respectful clothing.

Vatican City

I was reading a short article about what clothing people should pack for visiting Italy, when I came across these quotes. They clearly reflect the fact that respect or disrespect are shown by clothing:

• There are rules about the types of clothing that men and women can wear when visiting the Vatican City. These rules are in play due to issues about modesty and respect shown.

• Women must dress nicely, have shoulders covered, and wear skirts lower than the knees. No pants. Shoes must have closed toes - no flip-flops.

• Men must wear long pants, neat shirts with covered shoulders, and closed-toe shoes.

• If you don’t have appropriate clothing, you can purchase paper clothing to cover your own.

In a word, the Vatican City believes that all visitors, Roman Catholic or not, should show respect in the clothing they wear. They believe that certain types of clothing show disrespect.

Heads of State and other Dignitaries

Imagine for a moment that you are called to appear before the leader of your nation. Perhaps it is a president or prime minister. Maybe it is a king or queen. You are likely to receive suggestions on how you should dress to come into that person’s presence. Those in charge do not want you to convey disrespect through your clothing. Men wear suits with long pants, dress shirt, tie, and closed toe shoes. Women wear a conservative suit or plain, conservative dress with closed toe shoes.
**Weddings and Funerals**

Most people are aware that clothing shows respect or disrespect at a wedding or funeral.

- **Weddings**: Unless the bridal couple specifies clearly that you are to wear casual dress (on the beach, for example), weddings are a time to show respect by your clothing. Men wear suits and ties in conservative colors and styles. Shoes also are conservative – not flip-flops or sandals. Women wear dresses or suits in conservative styles and colors so as not to “outshine” the bride. They wear stylish, neat shoes to complete the ensemble. If someone attended a wedding in dirty or sloppy clothing; if someone attended in a tee-shirt with garish graphics and offensive wording; or if a guest came wearing a shirt that bore politically abrasive language, others would consider it an act of disrespect to the bridal couple.

  The Holy Bible speaks of a wedding guest that arrived in something other than wedding clothing and was thrown out of the wedding. Matthew 22:11 and 12 says this:

  “But when the king came in to look over the dinner guests, he saw a man there who was not dressed in wedding clothes, and he said to him, ‘Friend, how did you come in here without wedding clothes?’ And the man was speechless. Then the king said to the servants, ‘Bind him hand and foot, and throw him into the outer darkness; in that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.’”

  That man was not dressed the way he should have been for a nuptial ceremony. It was disrespectful for him to appear at a wedding in anything other than his best clothing.

- **Funerals**: Funerals are somber and respectful occasions, and most of us expect those in attendance to show respect by the clothing they choose. Men wear dark suits and ties in conservative colors and styles. Shoes also are conservative, with closed toes. Women wear plain dark dresses, or skirts and blouses. Tops are not low cut, nor are skirts high cut. Open-toe shoes are not worn. If hats are worn, they are tasteful rather than showy. Women do not normally wear flirtatious, revealing, or skin-tight clothing to the funeral of a friend or family member. Men do not normally appear in tee-shirts and torn blue jeans. Any guest who attended a funeral in such clothing would be considered disrespectful.

**Religious Gatherings**

Those who attend gatherings in churches, cathedrals, synagogues, and similar places also show their respect or lack of respect for their god by the way they dress. When they have been properly taught, and believe that God is worthy of their highest esteem, they wear their best clothing in His presence. They may have to wear the same clothing at every service they attend, but they will wear only their best. Those who appear in religious gatherings dressed in blue jeans and tee-shirts show that they do not recognize their god as worthy of honor. They dress better for their boss at work than they do for God, and thus show disrespect in God’s presence.

I recall passing by a Japanese temple once on New Year’s Day. Worshippers gathered from every quarter, intent on absolution of the previous year’s sins and preparation for a better year. Women and girls were dressed in their most beautiful kimonos. Men and boys were dressed in their best suits and ties. Everyone knew it was an important place on an important day. They knew that their clothing would show respect or disrespect to the deities they worshipped. They did not want to offend them.
What we wear delivers a message of how greatly we respect or disrespect others.

Here are just three (3) examples.

- **Tee-shirts** that feature words, graphics, or both. The words on some shirts are offensive and highly disrespectful to others. They may be vulgar, political, or offensive in other ways. In schools, students are regularly cited for wearing unacceptable tee-shirts, simply because the words may offend others. Tee-shirt graphics, too, are often calculated to insult or anger the viewer. They may be sexual; portray death; include demonic creatures or weapons.

  Those who wear tee-shirts with words or graphics usually do not do so by accident. They usually choose the shirts for the words and graphics. They identify with the shirt.

- **Tops and Dresses** that show too much. Girls who wear low-cut or bare-midriff shirts, blouses, and dresses are calling attention to themselves. They are purposefully asking others to look at them, and leaving little to the imagination. The same is true of sheer, see-through tops and dresses; and of tops that are too tight. Choice of such clothing is not coincidental. The wearer has something more on the mind than the business at hand. If such styles are worn to schools or places of employment, they distract others and take attention away from the one in charge. They also keep the one wearing them from concentrating fully.

- **Pants and Jeans** can be too tight or too sloppy. Some styles invite sexual thoughts while others identify the wearer with a group such as a gang. Whether male or female, the wearer of such clothing is crying out for attention. He or she wants to be honored, and seeks that honor through clothing.

While school uniforms can present their own problems, I found throughout my teaching career that schools with a strict requirement for uniforms usually had more respectful students.

**Clothing can show whether or not students respect teachers.**

We have seen that clothing shows either respect or disrespect in a courtroom; in places of worship; before dignitaries and heads of state; at auspicious occasions such as weddings and funerals; and even when applying for employment.

In similar manner, students’ clothing shows either respect or disrespect toward teachers. Any clothing that calls attention unduly to the student takes attention away from the teacher. Any clothing that is disorderly, dirty, or offensive in any way is an insult to the teacher. Clothing can say, “You aren’t worth the effort, Teacher.” Clothing can also say, “I respect you and your knowledge, as well as your willingness to teach me what I need. I show that respect by dressing neatly when I come into your presence.”
Teach young people how to show respect in clothing.

**Physician, Heal Thyself**

The first thing you should do when teaching young people about respect shown in clothing is to look in your own mirror.

- Does your own clothing show proper respect for those around you and for their positions?
- Do you dress in a manner that shows others you value them and hold them in high esteem?
- Do you avoid clothing that is sloppy, too tight, or offensive in words or graphics?
- Is your clothing always neat, clean, no buttons missing, etc.?
- Does your clothing show that you think others are worth the effort needed to look right?

When your own clothing is appropriate, help students assess their own clothing.

**Hold Up the Mirror for Children and Teenagers**

Students can learn to choose clothing carefully. They can learn that what they choose to wear at any given time shows whether they think others are worth the time it takes to dress properly.

Begin by helping them see themselves as they currently dress. Since they are probably in school, or in your home school setting, apply the lesson to that part of their lives. Help them see how to dress for school.

This can be done in one of three ways.

1. Have them stand in front of a full-length mirror and critique themselves. They should write their critique without speaking it. This is not a time to show off, but to be honest with self.

2. Take digital photos of each, and have them write out critiques of the photos. Again, this is a personal matter, and students should not work together.

3. Have them ask parents or teachers to critique them with honesty. They should take detailed notes of what is said.

The first two are valuable, but may be slanted in favor of the one looking in the mirror. We do, after all, tend to defend choices we have made. The third is the most valuable, but should be used only with adults that you can trust to be compassionate in their honesty.

**CAUTION:** Do not ask students to critique one another. At worst, they may be cruel. At best, they will have difficulty offering honest, constructive criticism.

**Making Changes**

Some young people may not have much to change. They may have been taught how to dress, even if they did not realize that clothing shows respect. Most, however, will have at least a few things that need attention.

Approach the changes in a non-threatening manner. Use photos to show respectful and disrespectful ways of dressing.
Show photographs of people dressed respectfully for the occasions given in our examples at the beginning of this lesson.

Use photographs of various, clothing styles and ask students to choose what will show the most respect at a given occasion.

Talk about appropriate clothing for school. Be crystal clear with students as you describe the clothing that shows disrespect and the kind that you believe shows respect.

If you are in doubt, go back to the examples in this lesson.

**Why, Why, Why?**

Talk about the reasons behind a judge insisting that people in the courtroom dress carefully.

- Why not wear tee-shirts with logos, rock band graphics, etc.?
- Why does it matter whether the clothing worn in a courtroom is clean or dirty?
- If you are just there to watch, why does it matter if your clothing is neat?
- Why should men and boys have to tuck in their shirt tails?

Ask them to think about why the Vatican City refuses to admit tourists who don’t have their shoulders covered. Why can’t you just wear sandals or flip-flops when you go there?

**The Answer Is Respect**

Be sure your students understand that in every case presented, the clothing requirements are made in order to show respect.

Ask them to write out what they would wear if they had an audience with a president, prime minister, king, queen, etc.

While they would not dress the same for school, ask them to take time before the next school day to select clothing that will show respect to the principal. (You could use yourself, but most will respond better if you use someone else who should be respected.)

When you get together the following day, compliment those who have chosen well. Try to compliment good parts if you cannot compliment the entire look. Refrain from criticizing disrespectful elements. Students will get the message if you accentuate the positive and ignore the negative.

Over the next few weeks, leave brief notes at desks of those who are showing respect in the clothing they choose to wear.