

<http://www.naplesnews.com/news/2014/apr/24/teaching-children-etiquette-in-a-social-media/>

## Teaching children etiquette in a social media world



It's a high-tech world where text messaging and Facebooking reign supreme, and basic face-to-face interactions are falling by the wayside.

Enter Laura Spell.

The Naples resident, in conjunction with the Naples English Pub, 5047 U.S. 41 E., is hoping to make the world a better place, “etiquetting” one child at a time, as she says.

“Social media is making people anti-social because they aren’t forced to talk one-on-one,” Spell explained. “They’re using acronyms and abbreviating words, losing the ability to communicate.”

Joan Cannon, the mother of one of Spell's students, couldn't be more thankful.

"She's made it her mission to teach children manners," Cannon said. "She's a gem for every mother who has a boy or girl."

"All I have to do is reference Miss Laura or ask Isabella, 'What would Miss Laura say?' and Isabella is aware of her manners," Cannon said.

Her daughter Isabella, 6, took modeling, charm and manners classes with Spell last summer. She liked it so much, she asked to go back.

Miss Laura, as she is known to her students, will teach children and young adults ages 5 to 15 years old a variety of life and social skills from June through August at the English Pub. (There is a dedicated separate entrance, steps from the main dining room, where students will be instructed, so they will not come in contact with the bar.)

Spell will have an open house at the English Pub from 2 to 4 p.m. Saturday to help kick off the etiquette "camps."

Lessons will include introductions, dining etiquette, basic hygiene and party planning. Hygiene includes bathing regularly, washing your hands, brushing your teeth twice a day and making sure your hair is clean.

On the last day of class, kids will plan and host their own party.

"It's a really good boost to their self-esteem," Spell said, "To be able to take ownership like that."

And Cannon agreed.

"It's the perfect age for children to feel good about what they're learning."

A full camp session lasts one week. There are two class options: Session I and Session II. Session I is from 9 a.m. to noon and lessons

include introductions, polite conversation, letter writing, invitations and thank you notes.

“Handwritten thank you notes are becoming less normal,” Spell said. “If someone took the time to personalize the note or letter, it becomes a very special item in anyone’s day.”

Session II takes place from 1 to 4 p.m. and lessons include introductions, dining etiquette, personal grooming, clothing maintenance and conversation techniques.

Classes are offered June 9-13; June 23-27; all of July; and Aug. 11-15.

Spell has not had any formal etiquette training, but says she is “self-taught” since she grew up around polite manners and society in Jackson, Miss. She also learned some aspects of etiquette, including polite introductions and dining etiquette from ballroom dancing.

One of the first things she teaches her students is how to introduce themselves.

“Some people don’t know how to carry themselves and make that first impression,” said Spell.

Next up on the list is dining etiquette because, as she explained, “Some people don’t know which fork to use or how to hold their utensils.”

After widowers signed up for Spell’s ballroom dance class in the hopes of becoming more social, Spell realized they no longer knew how to take care of themselves.

“Some of them just didn’t know to bathe every day and you’ve got to do that to meet someone,” Spell said.

Her children were in elementary school at the time so she wanted to set a good example. But sometimes that’s not enough and “you’ve got to take charge.”

“And it’s easier to do that with kids,” she said.

Five-day, three-hour classes are \$125 per child per week; discounts are available for groups of six and up.

“Since I teach in a graduating style, children will be able to attend additional classes for review and/or new age-appropriate skills to instill self-confidence,” Spell said.

Snacks and beverages are provided for traditional three-hour classes and lunch can be provided for all day classes at an extra cost.

### **Etiquette don'ts**

Technology and social media are causing manners to fall by the wayside. Laura Spell from Miss Laura's Manners and Dance Class has made it her mission to change that.

“Some people get embarrassed when they don't know or can't remember a person's name,” Spell said. “But that's an easy fix.”

A real etiquette faux pas, she said, is phone conversation in a public places that's loud enough for everyone to hear.

“A couple months ago, a man was on the phone and everyone knew about his conversation,” Spell said. “It was extremely distracting.”

Spell is also a stickler for gossip. It's rude, mean and just bad etiquette.

Another etiquette no-no is bad manners on the road. Etiquette doesn't stop when you put the key in the ignition. There is a certain amount of courtesy expected among drivers.

“Some people drive and they just don't see other cars,” Spell said.

And the last etiquette faux pas is not to leave the house without looking your best.

“My mother instilled in me to do my best (and) not to leave the house without looking put together,” Spell said.

That means making sure you've showered, washed and styled your hair and put on suitable clothes.

If you want to instill some priceless etiquette knowledge into your kids, Miss Laura operates etiquette summer camps at the Naples English Pub, 5047 U.S. 41 E., Naples; phone 239-438-2987.

if you go

### **Manners and Dance by Ms. Laura**

**What:** a summer camp that teaches children the value of proper manners and etiquette

**Where:** The English Pub, 5047 U.S. 41 E., Naples

**When:** various weeks this summer

**Cost:** \$125 for a weeklong, three-hour class

**Information:** 239-438-2987