

# Social and Emotional Learning

## Lesson Title: Social Awareness: The Art of Courtesy

### Grade Level: High School

#### Project and Purpose

Students analyze an article about the current state of courtesy and then create statues of situations that illustrate discourtesy and correct them to represent courtesy.

#### Essential Question

What does courtesy look like in different situations?

#### Materials

- Article: "The Importance of Common Courtesy" from Pitlane Magazine
- Discourteous Situation cards (provided)
- Space for movement
- HS Character and Life Skill Video "[Courtesy](#)"

#### Introduction

1. Review/introduce the concept of courtesy: The showing of politeness in one's attitude and behavior toward others. Ask students for examples inside and outside of the school setting (in a work environment, at home, with peers) where courtesy can be beneficial.
2. Post the definition of social awareness and ask students to tell you what they think it means in their own words.

**Social Awareness:** The ability to take the perspective of and empathize with others from diverse backgrounds and cultures, to understand social and ethical norms for behaviors, and to recognize family, school, and community resources and supports.

3. Ask students to think about how courtesy is part of social awareness. Drive the discussion into how different backgrounds and cultures can influence one's personal experience. Ask questions such as:
  - a. How is going to school different if English is your second language? What courtesy challenges does this present?
  - b. How do you courteously discuss politics with someone who disagrees with you?
  - c. How does courtesy differ for different groups of people?
4. If possible, watch the video "[Courtesy](#)" (from the HS Character and Life Skills).
5. Distribute the **Pitlane Magazine** article and allow the students to read it individually or in groups. Connect the messages the author is making with the prior discussion, but allow for students to discuss the tone and themes themselves; the tone of article may be perceived as condescending — this is a teaching moment about how tone can impact message and can be connected to the prior discussion in terms of how texts can be valid.
6. Tell students that in this session, they will work in teams of three to create courtesy statues.

## Group Demonstration

7. Show the discourteous situations cards and randomly pick one and tell the group you are going to create sculpture of the situation using students as your clay.
8. Ask for two volunteers and use them as your clay. As the artist, physically shape the clay by put the volunteers in positions that show two people behaving discourteously according to the card's instructions. If your school does not permit students to touch each other, demonstrate how to model the position for the clay with your own body and give verbal instructions. Self-narrate your thoughts and your actions as you sculpt your statue.
9. Mold their faces as well as their bodies and have them hold the position for the class to analyze. Step back and lead the group through an observation about the discourtesy being demonstrated. Ask any of the following:
  - a. What do they look like?
  - b. What are they feeling? How do you know?
  - c. Why do you think this happened?
  - d. What happened just before this sculpture? What will happen next?
10. Ask students to consider the changes that would be necessary to change the sculpture into a courteous version of the situation.
11. Remold them in courteous positions.
12. Ask other students to describe what they see now.

## Guided Exploration

1. Have a volunteer become the sculptor and two new volunteers become the clay.
2. The sculptor molds his "clay" according to the card selected.
3. Coach the sculptor from the sidelines to help define the facial expressions, body position, and other details of the sculpture.
4. Have the class describe what they see.
5. Have a new volunteer come up and change the sculpture to a courteous interpretation of the same event.

## Independent Practice

1. Form groups of three and have students determine the sculptor and the clay in each group. Remind them that everyone will have a chance to be the sculptor.
2. Pull a card and have each group create a sculpture of the discourteous situation.
3. Ask the sculptors to step back, carefully observe their sculptures, and then have them go back and redo the project to change it to a courteous response.



# Activity: Discourteous Situations

## Grade Level: High School

### Directions

Cut the cards apart to distribute to sculptor/clay groups. Encourage students to devise original situations.

One person carries many bags and is having trouble going through a door. A second person opens the door and goes through without holding it for the first person.

One person stands in line and a second person cuts in front.

One person reaches for a condiment at the same time as another, the first takes it.

One person walks by a bench and the person sitting on the bench trips the walker.

One person gives an answer in class and the second person makes fun of the person and/or the answer.

One person is the referee at a game and the second person angrily "gets in the referee's face."

One person is on an important phone call and the second person interrupts.

One person drops something, another person walks by without doing anything.

One person is about to park their car. After they turn on their signal, another person cuts them off.

One person trips and falls and the second person laughs at the first person.

One person talks on a cell phone in the movie theater while a second person tries to watch the movie.

One person waves to say hello, and the second person ignores the first person and walks by.

Two people are sitting and eating, and when a third person joins them they both leave.

One person is in a conversation with another. They mention a topic (sports, TV, comic books, video games, music etc.) that the other person doesn't know well, then laugh at the second person.

One person mockingly imitates a teacher, while another laughs.

One person points out another's clothing or shoes and makes fun of them.

One person is trying to comfort a baby, another person begins yelling at them.

One person is trying to (hit a baseball pitch, pass a soccer ball, throw a Frisbee/football/etc.) to another person and fails. The second person laughs.

One person opens their lunch, and the second person reacts as though it smells terrible or is offensive in some way.

## **Article: The Importance of Common Courtesy**

### **From: Pitlane Magazine**

It is not that long ago that common courtesy was indeed common. It was an accepted social norm; a fundamental part of our society that oiled the cogs of social interaction. Children were taught their Ps and Qs and to respect their elders. This ingrained attitude was reflected in adults that showed courtesy and respect to others, whether they believed those others worthy of such or not. While this was not true of all, it was true of most. Unlike today. Now common courtesy is most notable for its rarity, invalidating its description as “common”.

The main benefit common courtesy provided society was not the formulaic courtesy or social manners it provided, but the consideration for others that it engendered. Being courteous necessitates considering the person you are being courteous to. The practice of being courteous therefore instills an attitude of consideration for others.

This is noticeably lacking in modern society. People are no longer considering how their actions may impact others, instead we are operating on the basis of what is most convenient for ourselves. We get on an escalator and stand in the middle of our moving step, blocking the way without any thought that someone behind us might want to walk up the escalator. We park our cars on footpaths without considering that a parent with a pram or pushchair will have to get out onto the road to get past.

A few years ago in Australia I saw a large amount of cars parked all over the verge and footpath outside a gym. Presumably these people were using the gym to improve their fitness, yet they couldn't park their cars legally and walk a little way to where they were going to exercise?

People are still considerate to others, even strangers. The offers of aid in many forms that flood in to help those who are victims of natural disasters demonstrates this. But we only seem to have this consideration when circumstances thrust the need into our faces. We have lost the innate ability to consider others in our day to day activities, because we have lost the education and practice of doing so with the loss of common courtesy.

Common courtesy was inherent in Western society at the same time as racial and sexual discrimination predominated. A very strange mix it is difficult to comprehend. Unfortunately, it has proven to be a casualty of the worthy and essential fight for equality.

Some aspects of common courtesy and many of the men who practiced it, presumed female inferiority. As such, courteous practices were frequently targeted by militant feminists. It has always been my practice to hold a door open for anyone following me. And I mean anyone, child, adult or elderly. During the height of the campaign for sexual equality I had to refrain from doing so if the person behind me was a teenage through to middle-aged woman to avoid the possibility of receiving a tirade of verbal abuse. Because I was a man and she was a woman, apparently the only reason she could perceive for my doing so was that I considered her inferior to myself. That I might do so for a child or another man as well was apparently beyond conception, perhaps a justifiable attitude in some, but still an arrogance I deplored in those I considered to be fighting for a worthy cause.

I am glad that I can again do it for all, and generally receive at least a smile for doing so from women as well as men of most ages; I'm sad that I receive little if any acknowledgment from many younger people. Perhaps they are at a loss as to how to react to someone actually doing so.

