
Guest Opinion: Nice people finish first

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Chances are that you've heard the expression, "nice guys finish last." Nothing could be further from the truth. This statement is used by many to justify less than ethical treatment of others.

Under the guise of not wanting to finish last, people engage in inconsiderate conduct. At best, this type of behavior will give the illusion of short-term gains. These apparent gains come with a high price; the forfeiture of building a solid foundation of living which will last a lifetime.

Being nice is not synonymous with subjugating your dignity or your right to assert yourself. Don't allow yourself to be used as a doormat. Everyone, at one time or another, has been in a situation where they felt obligated or pressured to agree to do something that they didn't want to.

Being nice entails being considerate, polite, respectful and thoughtful. Being nice means not elevating yourself by stepping on others. Being nice requires understanding that you are not better than someone else and no one is better than you. Being nice compels you to help people without expecting anything in return.

Unfortunately, there are those who view being nice as a sign of weakness and as an invitation to take advantage. However, no one can take advantage of you without your permission and participation.

Your response when someone tries to take advantage of you sets a precedent that determines how you are subsequently treated. Unless you make your limits clear, people will continually try to push your boundaries.

Your limits will be tested on several fronts: at work, by family and by friends. Each situation requires a different approach. At work you have an obligation to perform certain services in return for your pay. But when requests fall outside your normal job responsibilities, you must decide whether you want to or should comply.

It's not uncommon to experience direct or implied pressure that your employment or advancement might be affected if you say no. This is a very uncomfortable position to be in, but it happens.

Be clear in your own mind what your limits are. Don't allow yourself to be held hostage because you are afraid to say no to unreasonable or inappropriate requests.

If you are so concerned by job security that you won't say no, you essentially broadcast that you have no limits. As a result, you will continually be taken advantage of. When appropriate, say no, and you will usually find that nothing bad happens and you are treated with more respect.

Requests from family and friends are somewhat different. Guilt and peer pressure is used to cajole you into doing what someone else wants. Exceed your boundaries and you will be taken advantage of repeatedly. Decline requests with politeness and a smile.

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