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## People Skills for Teens

DO YOUR HIGH SCHOOLER'S SOCIAL SKILLS NEED A LITTLE RESUSCITATION? TRY THESE TIPS.

Teens know all about FaceTime. But how about face-to-face interaction? Your adolescent might be totally tech-savvy yet, shall we say, lagging a bit when it comes to the social skills they need for everyday life. Sound familiar?

It does to Kirt Manecke of Milford, and it inspired his recent book, *Smile & Succeed for Teens*. With the help of a group of local teens, parents and teachers, Manecke – an author and sales/marketing specialist – wrote a crash course designed to teach high schoolers these valuable skills. He even enlisted them to edit it. The result is a direct, helpful guide without wasted words or time.

We challenged Manecke to whittle it down even more. So if your child is better at social media than socializing, this might be just the excuse to help him or her out of that shell.

**KNOW THE VALUE.** A restaurant owner

once told Manecke he can't hire teens. Why? They're lacking basic customer service skills. "You are around people all of the time," Manecke says. "You have to have these communication skills. Otherwise, it's going to be a real uncomfortable journey." They also help with school and even making friends. Simply put, these chops enable teens to talk to people.

**COMMON COURTESY.** Another time, a teen emailed Manecke via LinkedIn for a job recommendation. The request was full of acronyms and missing a simple "thank you." Knowing how to send an email – and digital etiquette in general – is super important. On the job, turn electronics off whether there are customers in the store or not. And saying "please," even digitally, is a must. But "plz" instead of "please" won't cut it.

**FIRST IMPRESSION FINESSE.** When it comes to getting a gig, it's key. Making eye contact, smiling and avoiding the "dead fish" handshake are all great ways to make sure your teen is remembered. "These are the fundamentals," Manecke says. "If they don't get this stuff right, the rest isn't going to matter." Teens should also know how to respond to others. Saying "no problem" is not the same as saying "you're welcome."



Get the book

Buy *Smile & Succeed for Teens* by Kirt Manecke on Amazon.com. He also offers tips and ideas at [smileforteens.com](http://smileforteens.com).

**PRACTICE MAKES PERFECT.** Fine-tune these chops by role-playing and practicing with your kid. Greeting a waitress or someone as they pass by in the hall at school can be perfect opportunities to improve. "Every day, there are instances (where) they can practice these skills," he said. Parents can help their kids by setting up mock interviews and asking standard interview questions. The more practice Junior gets now, the more comfortable he'll be in the future. ☺