



Adults Behaving Badly

IT IS WELL KNOWN THE INTERNET HAS OPENED the doors to the amount of information available, literally, at the click of the mouse. With a few rapid-fire clicks, you can read about the latest political debate, switch to celebrity gossip and loop back around to international politics, with stops at every imaginable story along the way. It doesn't matter what you read, though, there is always guaranteed to be a trough of negative, nasty and disparaging comments from which to feast, at the end of any article or post. Comments quickly spiral down to personal attacks, name calling, cruel assumptions and wishes of ill will. This is what is called "adults behaving badly."

I would like to think it is the anonymity of hiding behind the screen that allows people to speak so hurtfully, rudely and disrespectfully to one another, but the sad truth is, as we become desensitized to feelings and increasingly disconnected, thanks to the Internet and social media – those electronic tools that are supposed to bring us together – this "adults behaving badly" behavior is spilling over into our everyday life, more and more. We appear to be becoming a society where decorum, civility, respect and kindness no longer have a space in our lives. We care more about getting our own way, and pulling someone else down – whether through a stinging barb, a nasty comment or a belittling action. I am seeing more and more negative and nasty behavior among adults lately.

At a recent event I attended, I witnessed this phenomenon of adults behaving badly, firsthand. As a speaker at the event, I had been seated in the front row of a full auditorium, so that I might have a short walk to the stage when I was called up to speak. Also seated in the same row as me were three guests of honor. As the auditorium began to fill up, two older women entered and approached where the guests of honor were seated. "What did you do with my purse?" snapped one of the women. "It was on that chair. You moved it." I listened as the guests of honor apologized for any confusion, but noted that nothing had been on the chair when they had been seated in that spot by those in charge. They

graciously offered to help look for the woman's purse. "Well, it didn't sprout legs and walk off," replied the woman, "you moved it." She then turned to her companions and said, loud enough to be heard, "I don't know what makes *these* people think they get to sit in the front row!"

One of the guests of honor turned around and politely asked her if she would like to trade seats so she could sit in the front row, if she felt she should be there. The woman declined, yet continued to make disparaging comments about this group of guests to the others in her party. Another member of her party yelled out, interrupting the speaker at one point. It was "adults behaving badly" in its purest form.

I wondered if they ever stopped to consider the story behind the people to whom they were speaking in such a rude tone. Though they saw these guests of honor as meaningless and unimportant to them, they missed the story behind them, which I learned after talking to them. I wonder if they would have spoken to them that way if they had known that the previous week two of them had spent three days in the hospital, by the bedside of a family member who had been rushed there in an ambulance. Or if they had known that, due to the expense of having a child with a life-altering medical condition, two of them rarely allowed themselves the luxury or expense – both financial and time – of a night out. Extra jobs, rather than vacations, are what this family takes, in order to cover all of the medical expenses. This was the rarest of evenings for them, a special date night, long ago written on the calendar and something they had looked forward to as a bright spot, until these adults behaving badly marred their evening. A night out is a luxury not often available to these parents who would be back in the hospital again, two days later, by the bedside of their child. While the adults behaving badly were selfishly concerned about getting the best seat in the house for themselves, these guests were simply grateful for the chance to be there.

Selfishness, greed, rude comments, name calling and cruel assumptions are the ingredients of a dish called "adults behaving badly," and it is one that is being served up all too frequently lately. I am tired of feasting upon it. It is a dish that leaves us all feeling bloated, sick, uncomfortable and worse for the wear.

What is the antidote to all of this negativity? I believe it is gratitude and thankfulness. It is nearly impossible to spew anger, entitlement or selfishness when you are focused on all of the things, big and small, for which you have to be thankful. Focusing on our blessings takes away the need to cut others down or try to lower them to our level; rather, it overflows the heart and spills out onto others, changing our lives and the lives of those around us.

What an appropriate time of year this is to focus on our thanksgivings. Wanting to prove that not all adults behave badly, we decided to open the pages of this issue to you, our readers, to have you share what you are thankful for this year. We wanted to overflow the pages with your thanksgivings and grateful comments. The results are beautiful, showing that *everyone* in our community has something for which to be thankful. Turn to page 56 and see the beautiful thanksgivings and comments that were sent in.

Now, the comment section is where the thanksgiving begins. Happy reading!

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