


<p><b>Autobahn for All</b> Sales Event →</p> <p>Legal</p>	<p><b>0% APR on all models*</b> <b>+ No first payment**</b> (But hurry, they're going fast).</p> 
---	--

## Self-respect, responsibility make a civil society

Published Saturday June 13th, 2009

**G3** Jay Remer

Over time, in this column, I have discussed various aspects of etiquette, emphasizing that respect is the foundation on which all etiquette and good manners is based. It is also based on common sense, a handy tool and attribute that most of us have but which we sometimes under-utilize or forget about entirely.

 ENLARGE PHOTO



Before I can really have respect for someone or something, I must have respect for me. And with this dynamic comes the onerous task of self-responsibility.

I believe personal irresponsibility is one of the fatal chronic afflictions pervasive in society today and that, for many, it was instilled in our youth.

I, for one, was raised to believe that doctors, lawyers and bankers not only had all the answers and could fix all our problems, but their abilities to do so were an innate part of their jobs. The responsibility for our lives and our ability to be happy was cheerfully handed over to these demagogues. By doing so, we would all live happily ever after, or so I was led to believe.

Then I grew up. I began to feel chinks in that suit of armour that I had worn so elegantly. My fairy tale had become home to a host of villains cloaked in the garbs of indifference, inexperience and ineptitude. And they had become protagonists in my life, elevated from the seemingly minor roles they had played for so long. Gradually I learned that I needed to take back control of my own health, my inalienable rights and my financial well-being, which I had previously relinquished. No longer could I rely on others to guarantee that everything would be OK.

In the realm of health care, many of us have chosen to supplement conventional medical care with a whole variety of alternative therapies. We realize that no health-care provider can be master of the universe. We now know we need to become more in tune with our own bodies and minds. Hence, self-responsibility comes into focus.

We assemble holistic teams of health-care professionals with ourselves as quarterback. As if part of a grassroots movement, we share our experiences and insights with one another. This does not diminish our need or respect for health-care professionals; rather it serves to put the responsibility of our well-being into our own hands. We have a greater awareness to possible solutions and futures. Our self-respect evolves into a recognizable form and palpable force.

When it comes to human rights, numerous books have deservedly been written about the tremendous strides we have made and continue to make as a society. Preserving these rights is in the hands of ministers of justice and also with us as the challengers of improperly entrenched values and outdated morays. How else would the violation of the rights of minorities, women, victims of unscrupulous corporate greed and casualties of other injustices be brought to light and corrected? Respecting our fellow man collectively as well as individually has brought many wrongs to the forefront of our consciousness and thereby enabled the start of a processes toward righteousness.

For those of us whose financial world has recently been turned upside down, we now realize that some of the business practices we adopted or allowed to govern our fiscal stability were seriously flawed.

Unfortunately some of us had relaxed the control of our assets and easily fell for the 'too good to be true' enticements of easy credit, mortgages that were far too easy to secure on over-valued properties and stocks and bonds whose meteoric rises had no apparent end in sight.

Then suddenly, effortlessly and steadily the markets and our real security unravelled like a ball of string. Creditors and mortgage holders played hard ball. A great many of us found ourselves in rough seas drowning in debt, confusion and feelings of helplessness, even hopelessness. We were forced to face the music, often to a staccato as screeching as any horrific natural disaster. Many of us will emerge from this experience scarred, some permanently. But emerge we will and stronger will we be. And as a result we will have to take charge of our finances as we never did before. This is a vivid example of how developing respect for one's self improves one's situation and, in fact, ensures one's very survival.

Taking back our own power of being responsible for ourselves and for our fellow man begins with respect. This is the very foundation of civility. Practice it; it's contagious.

Jay Remer is certified by the Protocol School of Washington as a consultant for corporate etiquette and international protocol. He lives in St. Andrews. Email your etiquette questions to [jay@etiquetteguy.com](mailto:jay@etiquetteguy.com) and visit his website at [www.etiquetteguy.com](http://www.etiquetteguy.com).