

Reverse Discrimination

I have heard your talks on respecting others and not passing judgment on them because of the way they look or because of their social status. I agree, but I wanted to let you know that it goes both ways. I guess you'd say I'm a popular kid and I've experienced the ridicule of others because of my popularity. Just because I'm popular doesn't mean I don't struggle with feelings of insecurity and self-image stuff. I would love it if you could just talk about that.

It's great that you can recognize how these things affect your life. What you're describing is a form of reverse discrimination. When most people think of discrimination, they may often think of those minorities who have rightfully had to fight for their dignity and inalienable rights to be lived out in a free society. We may think of different racial rights movements or the equality of women in the workplace. For some, their cause is to fight for the rights of children, the handicapped or disabled.

These are great causes that have gained a lot of publicity and have been the subject of many famous speeches throughout history. So, when we hear the word *discrimination*, we usually don't think of it being applied to the popular kid in school who may appear to have it all together. But there are those who do look down on others who are successful, attractive, popular, athletic or gifted. Their reasons vary: jealousy, arrogance, pride, superiority, or assumptions about the other person's character or integrity. But regardless of those reasons, it is no more acceptable than discriminating against someone who may be a minority. We should all stand up against discrimination of any kind.

Whether you're popular or feel like you're the outcast kid in school, the challenge remains the same: we need to respect others around us, including those we may disagree with or find it difficult to relate to. Do you respect people, property, possessions, those in authority, teachers, coaches, parents, elderly, gifted, handicapped... and the person you disagree with most? You can disagree with someone and still respect them. Yes, you can even dislike someone and still treat them with respect, even if you feel their actions are not respectable. Ending discrimination begins with each of us as individuals by respecting and valuing every one, no matter what their status or abilities are.

Mother Teresa once said, "If you judge people, you have no time to love them." It is so true. Love continues to be the most important goal for mankind. If we can look beyond the exterior and into the interior where the true person resides, we can't help but love. We may need to look past walls that have been built because of past hurts. We may need to peer beyond a façade they wear to notice the gaping wound of disappointment they feel, but don't dare tell anyone for fear of being found out. When we see people for who they really are inside, we soon realize that they're not really all that different after all. In humility, let's break down those walls together and respect, value and encourage each other in love.

Articles are written by Bob Lenz, Tiffany Thompson and other national youth communicators with Life Promotions Inc., a non-profit youth organization committed to instilling hope, worth and value in youth.

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