

SOCIALLY CONFIDENT in 60 SECONDS

Deborah Smith Pegues



HARVEST HOUSE PUBLISHERS
EUGENE, OREGON

Unless otherwise indicated, Scripture quotations are taken from the New King James Version. Copyright ©1982 by Thomas Nelson, Inc. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

Verses marked NIV are taken from the HOLY BIBLE, NEW INTERNATIONAL VERSION®. NIV®. Copyright © 1973, 1978, 1984 by the International Bible Society. Used by permission of Zondervan. All rights reserved.

Verses marked NLT are taken from the *Holy Bible*, New Living Translation, copyright ©1996. Used by permission of Tyndale House Publishers, Inc., Wheaton, IL 60189 USA. All rights reserved.

Verses marked kjv are taken from the King James Version of the Bible.

Cover by Koechel Peterson & Associates, Inc., Minneapolis, Minnesota

Formerly released as *Socially Smart in 60 Seconds*

SOCIALLY CONFIDENT IN 60 SECONDS

Copyright © 2009 by Deborah Smith Pegues

Published by Harvest House Publishers

Eugene, Oregon 97402

www.harvesthousepublishers.com

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Pegues, Deborah Smith,

Socially Confident in 60 seconds / Deborah Smith Pegues.

p. cm.

Includes bibliographical references (p. 141).

ISBN 978-0-7369-6229-2 (pbk.)

ISBN 978-0-7369-6230-8 (eBook)

1. Etiquette. I. Title.

BJ1853.P44 2009

395—dc22

2008020281

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form or by any means—electronic, mechanical, digital, photocopy, recording, or any other—except for brief quotations in printed reviews, without the prior permission of the publisher.

Printed in the United States of America

16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 / BP-CD / 10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

Acknowledgments

This book could not have come to fruition without the contribution of many wonderful people who desire to see the world demonstrate more civility and culture. Special appreciation goes to the members of my dream team at Harvest House Publishers: Terry Glaspey, director of acquisitions and development, for his encouragement, creativity, and always-sage advice; and Peggy Wright, Kim Moore, and the editorial staff for their diligence and commitment to producing a quality work.

Special thanks go to my friends Josie Martin and Lainie Sloane, consummate etiquette mavens, for their preliminary critique and invaluable input.

Numerous other individuals either shared their insight, social blunders, and pet peeves or they prayed for the project. They include Judge Mablean Ephraim, Paul Jackson Jr., Tyrone Potts, Kelvin and Delisa Kelley, Gene Smith, Alvin and Pamela Kelley, Redelia Fowler, Billie Rodgers, Harold and Ruth Kelley, Pamela Johnson, Kecia Ephraim, Monique Swoope, Dana Lacy, Keeley Garth, Dana Smith, Debbie Ducre, Sandra Sims Arceneaux, and Darlene Bowman.

Finally, words could never fully express my gratitude to my husband, Darnell, for his never-ending sacrifices and support to facilitate my writing efforts.

Contents

Prologue	7
1. Wisdom for a Winning Personality	11
2. Common Courtesies	15
3. Money Manners	19
4. Confident Dining	23
5. Business Dining and Entertaining	29
6. Making Introductions	33
7. Making Small Talk	37
8. Networking	41
9. Office Etiquette	45
10. Meeting Manners and Protocols	51
11. Job Interview Etiquette	57
12. Air Travel Etiquette	61
13. Tipping Tips	65
14. Cross-Cultural Etiquette	71
15. Your Home Office Image	75
16. Email Etiquette	79
17. Cell Phone Etiquette	83
18. Giving and Receiving Gifts	87
19. Dressing to Impress	91
20. Proper Grammar and Diction	97

21. Entertaining at Home	101
22. Houseguest Guidelines	105
23. Dating Protocol	109
24. Gym Etiquette	113
25. Church Etiquette	115
26. Wedding Guest Etiquette	119
27. Funeral Etiquette	123
28. Ten Tips for Teens	127
29. Social Blunders	129
30. Popular Pet Peeves	133
Epilogue	139
Bibliography	141

Prologue

While attending graduate school at the University of Southern California in Los Angeles, I accepted a dinner date with a fellow student who was also enrolled in the Master in Business Administration (MBA) program. The server at the slightly upscale restaurant brought us a finger bowl after our main course. Of course, we were supposed to simply dip our fingers in the small bowl of warm water and then dab them dry on the napkin. Perhaps it was the slice of lemon in the water that caused the confusion. Before I knew it, my brilliant date picked up his bowl and drank the water. I was mortified! Of course, wisdom dictated that I not react or comment, but I thought to myself, *He is in dire need of etiquette training!*

Even though we wish we could forget them, we have all made a social faux pas or two at some point in time. Unfortunately, such behavior can hinder our progress professionally, socially, and even relationally. That's why I'm writing this book. I have always been fascinated by the rules of etiquette. Growing up, I read every article and book that came my way regarding proper behavior and social graces. No one in particular encouraged my passion. I simply wanted to know how to do things right.

Immediately after graduating from the MBA program, I enrolled in the John Robert Powers finishing school. I went beyond the standard six-week course and opted for the one-year teaching curriculum. I knew that being socially polished would increase my confidence and put me at a professional advantage. The only trepidation I had about taking the course was the fear that such training would cause me to become a social perfectionist who was no fun at casual events such as picnics and ballgames. I did not want to become the etiquette cop who wrote tickets—verbal or silent—to everyone who violated proper social behavior. My fear proved to be unfounded. I learned that the whole concept of etiquette is centered on three guiding principles: consideration, convenience, and common sense. Observing proper protocol should never make others feel inferior or uncomfortable in any way.

The training at John Robert Powers was one of the best investments I've ever made. While I do not consider myself an etiquette expert, I do feel a responsibility as a Confidence Coach to provide a quick tool that will help eliminate or minimize the social insecurity and embarrassment of simply not knowing how to behave in certain situations.

As an inspirational writer, I faced somewhat of a dilemma in approaching this project. While I have a passion for teaching people how to incorporate the Bible into every aspect of their daily lives, I wrestled with the idea of trying to write an etiquette book with an inspirational twist. Further, I was concerned that potential Christian readers might consider social protocols and manners to be worldly concerns—and certainly not something that heavenly minded folks needed to spend much time pursuing. After all, using the wrong fork was not going to doom anybody to eternity with the devil and his infamous fork.

My wrestling came to a halt when I realized that etiquette is indeed the considerate, convenient, and commonsense way of relating to others. The underlying principles of such behavior come directly from the Scriptures: “Just as you want men to do to you, you also do to them likewise” (Luke 6:31). Certainly, anyone claiming to be God’s child must be even more motivated to model the highest standard of social and professional manners.

I have heard some refer to social graces as “Southern hospitality.” However, as I study the Bible, I realize that it is really “scriptural hospitality.” God mandates certain protocols for interacting with others whether one is a Southerner or not. A former Southerner, I now live in Los Angeles, California. It is a melting pot of people of various cultures who interact with each other at warp speed—and often with great indifference. Needless to say, kindness and consideration are not the daily norm. I would love for this book to spark a movement that would abate this trend.

I have established two goals in writing this book: First, I want to instruct or remind you how to do things right so that you can gain the social confidence you need to succeed in the world. Second, I want to challenge you not only *to do things right*, but *to do the right thing*. Yes, doing things the proper way may enhance your career, bring you into favor with influential people, or earn you a reputation as the consummate host, but these things are secondary benefits. God has established a code of behavior that He wants to be the standard in His kingdom. I call it Kingdom Etiquette, and the rules haven’t changed since the beginning of time. God always wants us to do the right thing—even when others misbehave toward us. Extending grace is the right thing to do. Columnist Thomas Sowell says,

“Politeness and consideration for others is like investing pennies and getting dollars back.”

From developing a winning personality to avoiding popular pet peeves, this book will coach you to confidence in any situation. Assuming that you only have a minute or so to spare, I'll get right to the point and discuss only the essentials of each topic area. If you desire a more extensive discussion of a subject, feel free to consult any of the excellent books or websites listed in the bibliography. Now let's get started.

Wisdom for a Winning Personality

You could be the most polished or sophisticated person on the planet, but if people don't like you, you'll have few opportunities to interact with them. Some individuals have the kind of personality that brightens up a room, while others improve the environment by their departure.

Personality is the visible aspect of your character as it impresses others. Without a pleasing personality, achieving your personal and professional goals will be an uphill battle. This chapter is not about changing who you are or turning you into a people pleaser. It is about coming to grips with the fact that whatever you desire in life will be achieved through other people. Consequently, you must be mindful of behaviors and character traits that attract people and those that repel them.

As you read the following tips for a winning personality, consider areas where you need to shore up your interactions with others.

- Smile. Keep it genuine. Don't smile just to show off your new cosmetic veneers or caps (however, if you need them, they will be a great investment and will boost your confidence). Let your eyes smile also. A smile reflects your mental attitude, and it can affect the attitude of others.

- Listen. Be genuinely interested in other people. Try to limit the number of times you say “I” during your conversations.
- Don’t interrupt—even if the person is long winded. If you need to make a point, raise your index finger slightly as if to ask for permission to speak.
- Respect other people’s opinions. There is no need to argue about non-eternal matters or those that do not affect the quality of your life.
- Be quick to serve. Jesus cautioned His disciples, “The greatest among you must be a servant” (Matthew 23:11 NLT). Help others as if you were serving God Himself, because you are!
- Be generous. Don’t skimp on tips to those who serve you (see chapter 13 on tipping guidelines).
- Don’t be a moocher. Always pay your share—and then some.
- Be humble. Don’t brag about your position, possessions, people you know, or places you’ve traveled. Humility tops the chart as the most admired character trait. Pride and arrogance are the most detestable.
- Don’t succumb to your insecurities. Avoid putting yourself down. Know that you are adequate for every task, for your sufficiency comes from God (2 Corinthians 3:5). Confidence is a great people magnet.
- Make every effort to remember names. A person’s name, to that individual, is the sweetest and most important sound in any language.
- Always make the other person feel important and

valued. Do this sincerely and without hidden motives. Booker T. Washington said, “A sure way to lift one’s self up is by helping to lift someone else.”

- Praise the small and large accomplishments of others, especially your employees and family members.
- Be flexible and patient when unexpected situations arise. Learning to go with the flow will increase your emotional and spiritual maturity.
- Be a peacemaker in every situation. Resist partiality or respect of persons.
- Be a team player. This will take you further than being the Lone Ranger. Don’t worry about getting credit. You’ll get what’s yours.
- Earn the right to give constructive criticism by consistently showing concern for the other person’s well-being. Always give him your input in private and after much prayer.
- Laugh. Look for the humor in negative situations. Laughter releases endorphins, the chemicals in your brain that make you feel good. Laughter is also contagious.
- Learn to be “bi-social.” Know when to relax the rules of etiquette according to the situation or environment so you don’t appear to be stuffy and pretentious.
- Maintain a positive attitude. Believe, according to Romans 8:28, that all things are working together for your good when you love God and are called according to His purpose.

2

Common Courtesies

Some things should go without saying. However, for those of you whose parents or guardians skimped on your home training, or who move at lightning speed and don't tend to focus on manners, I'll remind you of what indeed goes without saying.

As you read each of the common courtesies below, constantly remind yourself of the golden rule: "Whatever you want men to do to you, do also to them" (Matthew 7:12). These foundational manners will improve the quality of your life as well as the lives of those in your social or professional environment.

- Greet people. Generally, the person who enters an environment where people are already present should be the first to extend the greeting. Notwithstanding, if a person enters your space and doesn't speak first, make brownie points with God by initiating the "hello." Even when walking on the streets, speak to people with whom you make eye contact. (I know this is a Southern habit, but trust me, it works in the big city also.)
- Give people your full attention when meeting with them. This is not the time to complete mindless busy work (organizing your desk, etc.) to redeem the time.

- Say “thank you” whenever anybody extends any kindness or courtesy to you or does anything to ensure your comfort or well-being. This includes family members who take out the trash, husbands who are financially responsible, wives who make dinner, pastors who deliver a great message, employees who finish a report on time, the waiter who brings your food, your gardener, the UPS delivery person, or anyone else who enhances your existence or adds value to your life.
- Say “please” when requesting anything from anybody, even if you ask your child to close the door. You can’t bark orders at folks and expect them to have warm fuzzy feelings toward you.
- Say “excuse me” when you interrupt, inconvenience, annoy, or cause a person any kind of discomfort or irritation (such as when you accidentally slurp when sucking through a straw).
- Don’t stare at people. Be sure to pass this lesson on to your children. It makes people uncomfortable.
- Don’t ignore disabled people when in a social setting. Talk to them. (But do not ask how they became disabled.) Engage in the same type of small talk as you would toward nonphysically challenged persons.
- Don’t tell an overweight person that she is fat. This is not news to her. Do not comment on someone’s weight gain in the presence of a weight-challenged person.
- Knock before you open a closed door. Wait for permission to enter even when it relates to your teenager.
- R.S.V.P. is an abbreviation of the French phrase

“répondez s’il vous plaît.” It means to reply to an invitation—whether you plan to attend or not. Unless the invitation says “and guest” after your name, it is for you only. Do not add the names of people you would like to invite. If in doubt, call the host and obtain clarity. Once you have confirmed your attendance, show up or you’ll look flaky and irresponsible for causing the host to incur unnecessary costs.

- Don’t discipline your children in public. It’s usually unnecessary if done at home. People are stressed enough without watching the drama of a rambunctious rebel and a powerless parent.
- Respect your elders. Go out of your way to assist an older person.
- Hold the door open for those following behind you.
- Walk to the right (in the United States) on sidewalks. If walking with another person, form a single line when you meet someone coming in the opposite direction.
- Let other people exit the elevator before you step on. Offer to press the respective floor numbers for others if you’re nearest to the floor control panel. Do not reach across someone to press your floor number. Ask the person near the panel to do it for you.
- Don’t call someone’s house late at night unless it’s an emergency. Find out what he considers “late” and honor his time boundary.
- If you call a wrong number, say “I’m sorry. Wrong number” rather than just hanging up the phone.
- Identify yourself when you call someone. “Hello, this is

Barbara Brown from the office. May I speak to John?” (or “Mr. Smith” if you are not on a first name basis with John). Also, if calling a married couple’s house and the spouse of the opposite sex answers the phone, be respectful and fully identify the nature of your call: “Hello, Mrs. Smith. This is Donna Davis from the office. We need Mr. Smith’s urgent input on a problem. Is he available to take my call?” Don’t say: “Mrs. Smith, I need to speak with John.”

- Apologize when you keep people waiting—and don’t make it a habit.
- Call before you pay a visit to someone’s home.

3

Money Manners

How much did you pay for that car?” the inquisitive passerby asked as I was putting coins into the parking meter. “A lot!” I responded, trying to hide my annoyance while at the same time attempting to be gracious. Obviously, he didn’t know that such a question was in poor taste and frankly none of his business. While the Scriptures declare “money answereth all things” (Ecclesiastes 10:19 KJV), we have no obligation to answer all the things people want to know about our money matters.

It’s no secret that we live in a materialistic society, and money issues are often at the forefront. It is our secret, however, as to how much we earn, pay for our necessities or toys, or how much we invest. However, just in case you’re in doubt about how far you can poke into someone’s affairs or how to respond when people practice bad money manners, here’s the scoop.

Personal Situations

- Develop a few pat (even lighthearted) answers to nosey questions regarding how much anything costs: “Under a million dollars!” “That’s confidential.” “Are you planning to buy one?” “Why don’t I give you the seller’s

contact information and you can work out the details.”
“It’s a secret. I’ll have to shoot you if I tell you.”

- It is okay to share bargain-price information with close friends. “Can you believe I only paid \$20 for these boots?” Share the deals.
- Never brag about the high cost or brand name of anything. This is a glaring display of low self-esteem and the need for validation and acceptance.
- Money often separates friends, so try to never ask a friend for a loan. If you must ask due to an emergency, voluntarily agree to sign an official promissory note that sets forth a due date and the amount of interest, if any, to be paid. Consider that your friend will lose interest on these funds while they are in your possession. If for reasons beyond your control you will not be able to honor the due date, advise your friend right away. If you are the lender, ask as many detailed questions as necessary to satisfy yourself that a true emergency exists. Feel free to say no—especially if the borrower is financially irresponsible. When will he ever learn his lesson if you continue to be his safety net?
- It is not proper to ask for a loan from someone who is a friend of your close friend or relative—even if you know she has the money. You will appear to be a taker or opportunist for sure since you do not have a close relationship with that person.
- Don’t feel obligated to reciprocate the value of a gift from a friend or relative. If, because of your limited funds, you cannot afford or don’t wish to spend a similar amount that was spent on you, buy what you feel the person

would use or enjoy. If the recipient is shallow enough to mention the disparity in the value of your gift versus his, kindly (maybe lightheartedly) reply, “I didn’t realize we were keeping score. You win.”

- It is tacky to plan your birthday party and then instruct guests to plan on decorating a “money tree” in lieu of gifts. This is like calling somebody up and saying, “Send me some money.”
- If you organize a celebration for a friend, consider everybody’s budget when selecting the restaurant. Provide the menu price range when possible and also inform the participants ahead of time if you expect them to chip in more for the honoree’s meal and group gift. Nothing is more embarrassing than for a guest to show up with a specific amount of money and then be hit with twice the expected cost. If you are the struggling guest, you must always expect to share the cost of the honoree’s meal, so plan for it or decline the invitation if you can’t swing it.
- If you must talk money, keep it generic. Stick to discussing prices for gasoline, housing, college tuition, and so on.

Business Situations

- Never discuss your salary, raise, bonus, or perks with anyone at work except your boss and the Human Resources department. You may create a morale problem for others—or yourself—if you find out that you are at the bottom of the pay scale.
- If someone asks you how much you make, respond, “Not as much as I dream about making.”