

## September, 2013 Character Trait – Punctuality

*Jan H. Gunter, Community Relations Specialist*

The Character Trait for September (2013) in the City of Opelika is “punctuality”. Its meaning is pretty clear: to be on time or prompt or habitually acting at an appointed time. But how does that definition translate into a *character trait* we should all strive to incorporate into our lives? Perhaps Elizabeth L. Hamilton, author of over 30 books, and countless other articles, on moral values and positive character traits, said it best when she stated, “Punctuality is an admirable trait of character, especially for those on the receiving end of it. Everyone appreciates doctors and dentists who exercise punctuality toward patients in the waiting room. Job applicants think highly of interviewers who practice promptness. Employers are favorably inclined toward employees who are punctual. Punctuality is an admirable trait of character no matter where it gets its exercise.”

People who have successfully incorporated the character trait of punctuality into their lifestyle, are those who have learned the value of identifying and prioritizing a “to do list” of things they must accomplish each day, and places they must be, and then arranging their time schedules in such a way as to achieve getting things done on time, and showing up for scheduled events when one is supposed to be there.

The good news is – even for those who have a hard time with it – punctuality *can be taught*. And once one has effectively incorporated it into their lifestyle, punctuality renders many positive results, for the one who practices it, in the eyes of those around them (including bosses, teachers, and other influential people in our lives). The following are some good reasons why all of us should take being punctual seriously, and work towards incorporating it into our daily lives:

- *Punctuality shows your respect for others.* People, who make it their habit of showing up to meetings on time, or handing in reports or projects on time, are saying with their actions, “I respect you and understand that your time is just as valuable as mine is.”
- *Punctuality shows you are a reliable person:* Normally, most of the assignments and duties people are given usually come with a “deadline” for when things need to be accomplished. People who – once they are assigned a task – work diligently to get their job accomplished on time become folks others deem as trustworthy and dependable.
- *Punctuality shows you are a trustworthy person:* People who are consistently on time with appointments or assignments show others that they can be counted on to get things done without having to be watched over to do so! They also tend to show others by their actions that they know how to make the most of their time in a concise, astute manner. And those are the folks employers like to have around.

- *Punctuality builds your own self-confidence:* The practice of being punctual not only helps *others* see us as dependable people, it helps *us* realize that we can put our “best foot forward” as we learn to prioritize our daily activities and time, and truly develop an “I CAN do this!” attitude. Setting priority time tables helps us develop discipline to organize our work so that we can accomplish those goals and objectives set out for / by us.

It’s important for all of us to remember that credibility begins with action. Being punctual is a great start towards obtaining credibility in whatever setting we find ourselves. As 19<sup>th</sup> Century English novelist William Makepeace Thackeray once wrote, “The *habit* of being prompt, once formed, extends to everything — meeting friends, paying debts, going to church, reaching and leaving place of business, keeping promises, retiring at night and rising in the morning, going to the lecture and town-meeting, and, indeed, to every relation and act, however trivial it may seem to observers.”

For some people, being punctual comes easily. For others, it requires some concerted effort and “practice” to achieve favorable results. For *everyone*, though, punctuality is a positive character trait which, when successfully incorporated into our daily routines and attitudes, helps us to develop strong, constructive relationships and interactions in this great adventure we call life!

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