

# THE RESPECT BASICS

8 ways to change  
your world  
inside and out

[www.the\*\*respect\*\*institute.org](http://www.the<b>respect</b>institute.org)

tell your  
**TRUTH**

have  
**COURAGE**

know  
you're  
**VALUABLE**

# THE RESPECT BASICS

follow your  
**PASSIONS**

get  
**HELP**

be  
**COMPASSIONATE**

trust  
your  
**GUT**

set  
**BOUNDARIES**

## What does RESPECT mean to you?

I've never met anyone who doesn't want respect. I've always wanted it, especially growing up with heartbreaking issues like family addiction, domestic violence, my own risky choices and negative thoughts about myself. There were times when I honestly didn't have one shred of respect for myself, for others or for my community. I also didn't know how to bounce back when disrespect was derailing me from reaching my dreams (or even having dreams).

Luckily, I learned that respect is always within reach because true respect starts on the inside. I discovered what we call **The Respect Basics**. Do you know what else I learned? At its root, **respect means to look again**. Think about it. You can spread respect by looking again when you meet someone—not continuing to judge them, seeing them as an equal and getting to know who they really are. You can look again when disrespect is taking over in a relationship and find respectful ways to end conflicts. You can look again at your harsh thoughts about yourself (and others) and practice self-respect instead.

When you practice The Respect Basics, you finally learn what it really means to respect yourself, which is **knowing you're a unique contributor to the greater whole**. Only with your self-respect going strong can you spread respect. You think and behave like: **I matter. You matter**. You also learn that you can not only survive, but **thrive** (to grow, succeed, be healthy and be a positive influence). I hope you understand that no matter what you're going through—struggling to reach a goal, recovering from tough circumstances, advocating for change—that respect truly is the remedy.

**“You can create a respect ripple effect throughout the world starting with you. And this world needs it. Trust me.”**

*—Courtney Macavinta, Co-Founder of The Respect Institute*

### 5 ways to use this book

- Get a journal to help you complete the practices on each page.
- Start a Respect Circle and practice with your friends or family.
- Read it over and over—The Respect Basics are something you practice every day for life.
- When you have a problem or challenge, randomly flip to a page and apply that Respect Basic to your situation immediately.
- Spread respect by passing this book on to someone else.



I tell my truth all over the place. Each year, I share my family's struggle for respect with thousands of people. Each day, I tell a group of friends what's going on in my life—the good and bad. When I update my status online, I'm real about what I'm celebrating that day, or when I've really hit a rough patch (like when I got sick after my son was born). By the way, the kind of "truth" I'm talking about is not told with the intention of harming anyone. Some may not like my truth. But it is my truth, not theirs. Why do I do this? Because the truth not only sets me free, it lets others know something really important: They (you) are not alone. Sometimes telling your truth is a quiet act. It's about being true to yourself and not being fake. Telling your truth helps you learn from your experiences, accept yourself more and recover from disrespect. So be honest about who you are and where you've been. If you've been hurt, tell your story to someone who can help. When you're stronger, tell your story to others to help them. When you've learned something powerful that can benefit us all, **Tell Your Truth** far and wide to help the world.

## Practice

For one week, Tell Your Truth in your private journal. Write about your past and present and your future dreams. Also write your true struggles. If you want, you can share your truth with someone who respects your privacy, someone you want to help, or someone who can just listen. If your truth includes being hurt, see **Get Help**.



If I'm the first person to ever tell you, or you've heard it a million times, believe me: You matter. I matter, too. And what we do with our time, talents and resources matters. Our behavior sure does matter: You have a huge impact whether you realize it or not. And how we take care of ourselves, each other and our world matters...more than anything. We all have equal worth. Despite what you've been taught, respect does not have to be earned. It's a baseline human right. When you **Know You're Valuable**, you don't think of yourself as below or above anyone else—period. When you believe, *I'm valuable*, you can't help but start to make healthy choices, treat people with respect and make the world a better place with your gifts and by achieving your goals and thriving.

## Practice

1. In your journal, write **DISRESPECT** at the top of a page on the left. Write **RESPECT** on the right. Make a line down the middle of the page between them.
2. Under **DISRESPECT**, list the top ways you and/or others have treated YOU like you're not valuable. Then list all the ways you're hard on yourself.
3. Under **RESPECT**, write one way you can value yourself next to each situation on the left.
4. When you **look again**, do you see a theme under each list? Next write an inspiring mantra to remind yourself that you matter no matter what. Start your mantra with *I was born...* Here's mine: "I was born to spread respect for all."
5. If you have a baby photo, put your new mantra next to your picture where you can see it every day. It will remind you to make choices today that reflect your growing self-respect.



## follow your PASSIONS

Well this is The Respect Basic that saved me. My senior year of high school, I was about to **not** graduate like everyone else in my family. But then, I got hooked on a passion: journalism. I decided to investigate how to get into college after all (hint: community college). I was soon editor-in-chief of my college newspaper. By age 22, I had my bachelors degree and was a reporter covering a big U.S. Supreme Court case about free speech. Following that single passion drove me to take a detour from self-destruction toward my destiny. Today I'm totally passion-driven, from taking a run so I feel energized to do my work spreading respect to small things like going to the playground with my son, Tru (because being a loving mom is now my #1 passion!). When we follow our passions, we show that we know: **I matter**. Following our passions helps us thrive because we're using our talents, finding joy, learning from missteps (which will happen!), and being of service to others. **Follow Your Passions** and self-respect will follow, too.

### Practice

Read the instructions first and then do the first step.

1. Sit down. Close your eyes. Put your hand on your stomach. Take 20 deep breaths. Keep your eyes closed. Picture yourself 5 years from now. What are you doing with your life?
2. Write in your journal what your Future Self was doing.
3. What do you need to do today to get where she/he is?
4. Think of one word that will remind you to Follow Your Passions. Write the word where you can see it every day.



Did you know your gut has a brain? True story. Scientists say your gut has 1 million neurons, which means it really does feel things, remember experiences and send you messages. If your gut is like mine, it never shuts up! And the more you listen, the clearer the messages get over time. My gut doesn't lie, but my real brain does. There have been so many times that my gut said: *This doesn't feel right*. But my brain said: *Forget it, don't say anything, but maybe she's right*. The times I didn't listen to my gut (a.k.a. intuition) are the times when disrespect took over. I've been physically hurt, suffered in unhealthy relationships for too long or been eaten alive by stress. My gut is the voice of my wisest self. Think of your gut like your internal compass that guides you in the best direction. Or maybe think of your gut like your clearest inner voice that reminds you of your goals and values so you can make choices that honor yourself. **Trust Your Gut**—it will tell you what's right for you and no one else.

### Practice

Pick a time period you want to commit to listening to your gut more closely. Is it one day, a week or a whole month? Next, each day, when you get a major gut check, listen. It may help to write the messages you get in your journal. Practice listening for now. Don't worry too much about what to do with the information (see the next few **Respect Basics** for clues).



Especially with people I'm close to, I can have a hard time saying "no" or saying what I want. I can get really afraid of their reactions. Or I've gotten in the habit of letting others pressure me. Sometimes, honestly, I lie instead of setting clear boundaries. Can you relate? The good news: You can always take your voice back. Setting boundaries is not about keeping people out, it's about letting them in by telling your truth. What will or won't work for you? First you have to listen to your gut for the answers to those questions. Some of your boundaries will be concrete, like you *never* think it's OK to do (fill in the blank) and you don't do it. More often, you'll adjust your boundaries as you learn. For some boundaries, you'll need to speak up to others, like: *I don't want to do that, I'm not available, or That doesn't work for me.* Ultimately, you **Set Boundaries** for your self-care. Here's the deal: You can't say yes to everything. Or when will you have time to sleep or the brain space to dream big?

## Practice

1. In your journal, get clear on your top boundaries. What are you saying YES to and what are you saying NO to?
2. **Your values.** What's important to you? What beliefs do you live by?
3. **Self-care.** How can you take care of yourself each day? Remember your goals, how you want to feel and how you want to treat people.
4. **Work, school, volunteering and passions.** What do you need to stop doing that is stressing you out or making you hate life? What do you love that you want to do more often?
5. **Relationships.** How do you want to maintain your self-respect when you're around friends, family or BF/GFs? Where have you gone past a boundary you need to re-set?





Compassion means to care about other people and show concern for their well-being. For example, if someone is being hurt around you, then you feel impacted—maybe even a bit crushed. If someone hasn't had the same opportunities as you, you don't write them off as less than you, but seek to understand them. When someone tells you they are suffering, you really hear and see them. You have empathy (correctly recognizing their emotions—like sadness or joy). But it's not about feeling sorry for them. Because that is pity, which is a version of feeling “above” someone else. Remember, respect is about equality: **I matter. You matter.** So being compassionate is the opposite of judging others. But if you're hard on yourself, you're probably tough on others too. When I'm judging someone else, or really angry with them, I'm not well equipped to **Be Compassionate.** It's easier to be compassionate when you're doing the other Respect Basics regularly so you are fed, rested, safe, valuing yourself, passionate and being honest. See how that works?

## Practice

Use the Respect Levels of Listening to practice compassion for yourself and others.

**Level 1:** *It's About Me.* I'm listening to myself.

**Level 2:** *It's About UnderStanding.* When you're talking, I'm listening to you. I'm not in my head thinking about what I'm going to say, judging or interrupting. I'm listening with my ears and heart. I sense what's important you. I don't give unwanted advice. I ask questions to understand you better. At this level of listening, I can get to know the real you and show compassion even after a short conversation.



I've lived through some dark experiences: the death of my father and brother, violence, family addiction, and one serious illness. I also took on new challenges: Like being the first person in my family to go to college.

I wouldn't have gotten through these experiences (to go on and empower lots of people) without tons of support. Research shows that people with strong support circles thrive. If you've been through serious disrespect, you'll need tools and even experts to help you recover. Or if you want to reach a big goal—or change the world—you'll need a team behind you. My mom once had to ask a complete stranger for help to get out of a deadly relationship. I'm glad she did. Getting help is the hardest Respect Basic to practice for most people I meet (whether they're age 15 or 50). Somewhere, many of us learned that asking for help is embarrassing or a sign of weakness. Actually, getting help—having a Respect Circle of support, using self-respect building tools, and learning new healthy behaviors to reach your goals—makes you stronger. Getting help isn't about people fixing you. A mother picks up a crying baby to help her, not because the baby is “wrong.” Right? **Get Help** to start advocating for someone who matters just as much as everyone else: you.

## Practice

- **It's simple: Ask for help today.** Think of anything you need support with or want to achieve. You can't do it alone. And why should you? Keep searching until you find the right person. Don't give up. People—including me—want to help you. (See *Tools & Resources* on our website for helplines.)
- **Create a Respect Circle.** This is your team. Who can help you stay healthy and passionate? My current circle includes a support group, a counselor, my husband, my best friend, a coach, more than one mentor, 100+ women in my private online group, my spiritual community and my doctor (for starters).



Building your self-respect is a brave act. It means you believe: *I am a unique contributor to the greater whole.* To know you matter, and make choices that show you matter, is actually not easy. Spreading respect for others who are not being treated as equals, or just telling someone “no” also isn’t easy. Your self-respect can be strong despite your circumstances, but you’ll need to keep it going strong to change your circumstances for the better. To achieve what you really want, you’ll need to challenge yourself. To improve, you’ll need to practice, practice, practice. To be an effective leader and have healthy relationships, you’ll need to take accountability for your impact. To be successful (or just keep going), you’ll need to turn what can feel like humiliating mistakes into gratitude, learning opportunities, new skills and ways to be of service to others. Finally, you’ll need to let failure and imperfection be a natural (even welcome) part of your goal-reaching formula. Annoyingly, NOT “doing it right the first time” is the best way to learn. The bottom line: To choose to Tell Your Truth, Follow Your Passions, Set Boundaries, Get Help—and practice all The Respect Basics—takes courage. So **Have Courage**. And know that living a life rooted in respect will be the best risk you ever took.

## Practice

1. Make a list of your top 3 goals.
2. For each goal, answer these questions:
  - What does success look like?
  - What does failure look like?
  - What does doing it imperfectly look like?
3. For each goal, now answer this question:
  - What is the most courageous next step I can take to achieve this goal?



THE  
**RESPECT**  
INSTITUTE  
I matter. You matter.

OUR MISSION IS TO MAKE RESPECT THE STATUS QUO.  
WE GIVE YOUTH AND THEIR INFLUENCERS TOOLS TO  
REDEFINE RESPECT AND BUILD SELF-RESPECT SO  
THEY CAN BREAK CYCLES OF DISRESPECT AND THRIVE.

## Our work

Since 2010, The Respect Institute has created collective-impact partnerships with leading youth development organizations to reach more than 30,000 youth and their influencers in more than 25 U.S. cities, 15 U.S. states and 5 countries.

- **Vulnerable youth.** Respect 360 is a toolkit containing 375 group and 1-on-1 activities, discussion questions, Common Core State Standard-aligned journaling assignments, and the Respect Basics Coaching method. Influencers use the toolkit to guide youth and young adults ages 11-24 to: redefine respect, practice The Respect Basics, break cycles of disrespect, strengthen connections with caring adults, and achieve positive life and academic outcomes so they can increase their resiliency and thrive.
- **Youth influencers.** Professional development and capacity-building training (in-person and online) certifies educators, counselors, mentors, and youth development organizations to integrate Respect 360 and Respect Basics Coaching into their girl and vulnerable youth development frameworks within schools, community-based organizations, child welfare, juvenile justice and residential programs.
- **Research.** Self-respect development research, including the study of self-respect indicators, and how self-respect impacts resiliency and academic outcomes for vulnerable youth.

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