Using only reason and the gentle weapon of mass dissemination, this pamphlet hopes to produce a kinder, happier and more decent world.

*If you have been given Why Manners Matter; this does not necessarily mean you have behaved intolerably but do consider that possibility.

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What are these manners of which you speak?
Manners are the courtesies and consideration that caring people show one another in everyday encounters.

Why do they matter?
We are social creatures, living in close proximity and interacting often, sometimes involuntarily, and manners act as a lubricant. They ease what might otherwise be a rather cramped, cross adventure. Some animals avoid their fellow creatures while others establish dominance through pecking order behaviour. As we are neither pandas nor are we chickens, civilised humans maintain civility by showing courtesy to one another.

Really?
Yes, really. Consideration is the foundation of civilization. Without it we are barbarians: wrathful, unkind, inconsiderate and eventually violent.

Most of us respond to thoughtfulness and generosity with pleasure, which we share. Rudeness makes almost all of us feel worse; breeding a spiral of incivility as we are discouraged from our best impulses and encouraged in our worst ones, passing our anger to our neighbours, like an emotional Newton’s cradle.

What? Are manners really an antidote to anger?
Well how did you feel last time someone pushed in front of you or failed to acknowledge a kindness or generally behaved as if you and your needs mattered significantly less than their own? Did it encourage you to behave well to the next person you dealt with? Did it improve your day? What it probably improved was your design of imaginary flamel-throwers.

When you behave uncivilly – if someone foisted this pamphlet on you with a furious glare and a seething “read this!” then yes, that does mean you – you make the world a worse place.

Do they work as well as drugs and alcohol?
Manners are certainly cheaper with no hangovers. They impose only the mildest inconvenience and cost little or nothing. Considerate actions cheer both parties and can cast a sunny loveliness that warms our mood and view of humanity. Rudeness, by contrast, sours everyone’s disposition

Can using the correct knife and fork matter that much?
You’re right, it doesn’t. This pamphlet is not about etiquette. Manners are the courtesies and consideration that caring people show one another in everyday encounters.

What if others are not polite?
“Children now love luxury. They have bad manners, contempt for authority, they show disrespect to their elders. ... They no longer rise when elders enter the room. They contradict their parents, chatter before company, gobble up dainties at the table, cross their legs, and are tyrants over their teacher’s.” That was Socrates, quoted by Plato.

Given that children seem to be about the same nearly 25 centuries later, I find it is less worrying when youth are uncouth than when adults are.

Though rude children irritate me – and gosh aren’t polite ones a delight? - I am shocked when I encounter really bad manners in the elderly. When the old abandon their manners, we are in a horrible decline and it is then that civilisation is in jeopardy.

What if I don't care about how other people feel?
Oh dear, can that really be true? Granted, it is estimated that those with no empathy for others, make up about 1% of the population so there is every likelihood that this pamphlet will end up in the hands of a psychopath or two, but lets assume you, dear reader, are not one.

There are many billions of people who probably don’t really care about how you feel either, if they all acted on their lack of caring then we would harvest a very great deal of unpleasantness indeed.

I am convinced! So which manners matter most?
A variety of excellent books on the subject exist and this is not intended to be a comprehensive guide to which manners matter. A handful - my fundamental four - are listed below

1. and 2. Say “please” and “thank you”
Because they indicate that you do not feel entitled to the kindliness of others and that you recognise when you have received them.

3. Say “I am sorry”
Because everyone makes mistakes and genuine remorse can ease the ill-feeling that the error caused. Too, saying sorry does not make your leg fall off as some people’s reluctance to apologise suggests.

4. Queue
This is probably my personal top of the manners that matter chart. I don’t just mean waiting your turn to be served, but also not stealing parking bays, not barging onto trains or buses or pushing into traffic queues. You are no more entitled than people who were waiting before you. Relying on their meekness to get away with taking a place advantage is bullying and arrogant. Too, one day it might make someone cross and they may be armed with more than a pamphlet.

Does it matter if I’m not polite to everyone?
Yes, it does. The underlying principle of good manners is the opposite of entitlement, manners are the behaviour that everyone owes and is owed. They probably matter most with strangers where there is no pre-existing relationship that will accommodate a lapse in consideration.

Thank you for reading this. I hope our time together has advanced the cause of a nicer nation. If you would like to do more, please visit www.whymannersmatter.com and download a pdf of this leaflet, which you are free to print and distribute. You are also welcome to leave accounts of your experiences of both good and bad manners and to express any views that you have on the subject.

Yours truly
The Motley Pamphleteer