

## Even a caveman can be couth

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Angela Sturdivant calls back right when she says she would. It's good etiquette. You'd expect nothing less from the woman who runs the Temecula School of Manners.

Sturdivant has been correcting us about picking our nose, belching, scratching our armpit, chewing with our mouth open, flatulence -- OK, enough of the gross stuff.

I'm a guy, so when it comes to manners, those social goofs are about the extent of my knowledge. I'm just this side of a caveman, also known as a middle school kid, whom she also teaches. At least I don't drag my knuckles on the ground.

Sturdivant teaches the obvious -- not doing the above-mentioned bodily functions in public, something even I know -- and the subtler, such as how to pick out your bread plate at a formal dinner.

For starters, I don't know that I've ever been to a formal dinner. But if I were to go, I suppose a caveman such as myself would just start shoveling it on the big plate. Talk about uncouth. It's one of those manners words.

Sturdivant says to remember BMW for such an occasion. Not the car, elbows-on-the-table-guy, but Bread, Meal, Water, from left to right, how the dishes are lined up at such gatherings. See, you just learned some good manners.

She's been teaching us since about 2002 through the Temecula and Murrieta community service departments, local schools and privately. She estimates she's taught more than 1,600 people.

She was inspired by her son Parker's middle school friends. While she thought Parker had good manners, theirs weren't so hot. She thought it would be a good idea to teach them, too, how to be comfortable in any situation, so she went to San Francisco to be trained on how to do so. No offense, locals, but she had to go out of town to study.

In Temecula, she teaches Little Princess Tea Parties, which even I know is obviously for little girls. Then there is Etiquette Survival, for ages 5 to 15, both boys and girls, and a companion parent workshop, something sneaky wives have been known to sign up their husbands for.

Notice that no husbands have ever signed up their wives. Gee, I wonder why.

She was going to teach a cotillion class, too, where people wear formal attire and learn the manners and proper behavior of a formal dance. She had to cancel, because not enough people signed up, but she's going to better advertise it and try again in the fall.

It's the first time she's ever tried to do a cotillion class through the city of Temecula, to give you an idea of our level of sophistication. Still, she thinks we have good manners as a whole. Just the fact she's been able to teach us for seven years ought to show there's interest.

Sturdivant, 50, a mother of two kids, has lived here since 2000. Parker is in college now; Gwyneth, her daughter, is 12. Sturdivant also substitute teaches locally, where I suppose she sees some bad manners from time to time.

She says lots of the kids recognize her from her etiquette classes.

"I enjoy the kids. I enjoy when the kids give me a hug and say, 'Thank you, Mrs. Sturdivant.' "

She's also thinking of teaching a class on business etiquette. Especially in this economy, where so many people are either looking for a job or worried about losing one, she figures people need every employment advantage they can get. "You don't want them to say, 'I'm not going to hire you because you ate like a slob at a luncheon.' "

Then there's the flip side: Is that somebody a caveman would want to work for?

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