

It's All About Me

by Betsy Barbieux

The world should be focused on me--or at least those in my immediate vicinity should be focused on me. Society should operate for my good. Rules should be enforced that protect me. Others should appreciate me and recognize my needs. Employers should be anticipatory of my wishes. Authorities should allow for my oversights.

Sounds like something from the "younger" generation.

The youngster behind the wheel complained to the officer she didn't know the speed limit was 25. Could he please give her a break even though she was going 60 and talking on the phone?

The college student said to his professor "What are YOU going to do to help me pass your course?" The professor remembers when students used to tell him THEY would do anything to pass, please give them something else for extra credit.

But, wait, "it's all about me" isn't just an attitude of the younger generation!

The homeowner complained that she should not have to pay a penalty because her assessment was late. The association should have known she was in the hospital and couldn't pay her bills.

At the mega office supply store, the customer waits while two clerks continue their discussion about leaving this job and getting another. There is no response when the customer says "good morning," but the clerk does turn around to say "that'll be \$124.36."

At a free conference for directors sponsored by a large management company, the participants stole the vendors' products from their tables. People who live in million dollar condos couldn't pay for the books they wanted.

The conversation at the next table is obviously one sided. The man talks on and on in response to "how was your day." You can see his partner is listening and patiently waiting for her turn. But the conversation never turns. The "so, how was your day" question never surfaces.

You expect babies to become fussy if it's past their feeding time, but who could believe a group of adults at a special event for directors could be so rude that the speaker had to cut short her presentation because they were hungry. Never mind that according to the agenda lunch was to be served at 12:30 and it was only 12:05.

On the basketball court, the million dollar player sits down on the floor and pouts. The officials should call a foul--after all he's the star of the team. Obviously, this player needs to come out of the game, but the coach must have been ordered to play him--at all costs. The cost in this case was the game. Not only do coaches seem to have lost their authority, but did you notice officials lost their authority on the court when they took off their striped shirts and donned the drab gray?

At some point in time, we must have forgotten that:

- ◆ Rules are for the majority
- ◆ Customer service is service to and for customers
- ◆ Don't steal

- ◆ Conversation is a dialogue not monologue
- ◆ It's rude to talk when someone else is talking
- ◆ There is no "i" in "Team"

Apparently the "it's all about me" world view can't be blamed on only the young. It is running rampant among ordinary citizens, homeowners, students, businesses, in personal relationships, and sports.

While it seems most everyone is focused on "me," the world has changed. Look at these statistics:

- ◆ The state's population will increase by 5.5 million by 2025 and will have doubled by 2050, when its population could surpass 32 million - or twice the 15,982,378 counted in the 2000 census. (That does not include the close to one million "snowbirds" who reside in the state every winter.) Kate Gurnett, "With Snowbirds Comes the Sprawl," Times Union, February 25, 2001.
- ◆ In the early 1940s, Floridians numbered a mere 2 million. By 1990, the state's population had reached just under 13 million. By 2000, the state was home to about 16 million permanent residents, a 23% increase in ten years, significantly higher than was expected. According to the Census Bureau, Florida adds about 750 people-net-every day of the year.
- ◆ Since 1990, not a single county lost population. Broward County grew by 368,000 in the 1990s, making it the third-fastest growing county in the entire nation. Neil Reisner and Tim Henderson, "Broward's Growth is Fastest in Florida, U.S. Census Says," Miami Herald, March 9, 2000.
- ◆ Between 1990 and 1999, only one-fifth (19%) of Florida's growth came from natural increase (birth). Just over half of all growth came from domestic migration. Another third resulted from international migration. "State Population Estimates and Demographic Components of Population Change: April 1, 1990 to July 1, 1999," Population Estimates Program, Population Division, U.S. Census Bureau, Washington, DC.
- ◆ The U.S. Census Bureau projects that Florida will gain 1.9 million additional immigrants between 1995 and 2025. ("Florida's Population Projections: 1995 to 2025," U.S. Bureau of the Census, Population Division)

Living together is going to get harder if for no other reason than population density. Living in close proximity will be a must. Traffic will get worse. Lines will get longer. Patience will wear thin.

Without a commitment to promulgate just rules and regulations and equitably enforce them, we will find our communities to be run by multiple anarchies - each owner looking out only for themselves.

Our association leadership must be business-minded. Directors and owners will have to look up and into the future and focus on "us" not "me." We need to be a part of working out solutions for our associations and our extended communities--cities and counties. Meanwhile, we face immediate challenges: Maintaining the common property, enforcing the documents, and a budget to support both.

Many people will agree that the sacrifice of one is for the good of the many, but no one is willing to be the one to sacrifice.

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