

Social disservice

Some walk right past me, ignoring the “hi, how are you?” I ask each patron. Some give me a half-hearted wave and head for the bar. Others give me time to ask each question and seat them promptly. But each person has a story, each individual has a tale.

I have worked around customer service since I was eleven, helping out around my grandpa’s tourism business whenever I could. My outlook on the customer service industry changed, however, when I began working as a restaurant hostess last October. I’ve been there for half a year and I’ve learned so much about people.

Some of my favorite customers are regulars at the bar. They make me smile with the way they bring humor and a sense of stability to the sometimes hectic restaurant setting. They come in with their same baseball hats and order the same drinks as the day before.

Although they tend to hang around after we’ve closed and come in before we open, these customers are generally easy. They know the menu front and back, so there’s never any question about what they want. They know what there is to drink at the bar, so they never have to ask. They’re just easy customers.

There are other customers, however, whose attitudes make each shift a little harder. They come in and demand a certain table, booth or high top. They seem to look down on me as if working as a hostess is something to be ashamed of.

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The way that some people treat servers makes me wonder if they respect anyone at all. It’s important to understand, especially at a young age, that every job matters, from service to CEO.”

– Cameron Murray

These people are the kind that make uber-specific orders, request light ice, and demand plasticware instead of silverware.

When they leave, their table is a mess. There is salt and pepper all over the table. They leave no tip. They make the evenings more difficult than they have to be, but they teach us to appreciate every person's job.

I've learned how to bite my tongue more often by working in a restaurant. Instead of letting peoples' frustration or anger get to me, I let it go. I have discovered how freeing it can be to just watch someone walk out the door.

Stubborn or standoffish customers can teach us kindness through their negativity; without them, I don't think I'd be able to fully grasp just how important tips can be. A seventy dollar check and a two dollar tip doesn't add up.

When someone comes in half an hour before closing and demands sweet tea, they typically end up getting upset and feeling as if the restaurant has poor service. What they do not know is that tea containers are one of the things servers have to clean before they can leave. Their cut work, or side jobs, must be done in order to clock out. When people come in and ask for tea that soon before closing, it's not logical to brew a whole new container for two glasses. They throw fits and threaten to walk out.

Seeing the everyday hustle and bustle of a restaurant over the past six months has changed the way I see people in the service industry; every person has a story, a family, a life outside of those double doors.