

Nov 4, 2022 ~ American Values #16: Authority and Rules (Lesson 57)

Phrases and Idioms in the article: [sth = something; sb = somebody]

freedom of choice = freedom to choose what you really want to say, do, think, etc.

self-expression = openly expressing your true feelings, personality, and ideas

have room left for sth or sb = have time for sth or sb ***When planning your weekly schedule, make sure you have room left for fun.***

authority = a position of power & responsibility to lead other people; the leader; the power and responsibility that a leader has

Our boss is in authority, so he is the authority, and we hope he will use his authority wisely.

question authority = don't assume a leader is always right; instead, ask yourself if what the leader said or did is really good

challenge authority = if you think a leader said or did something wrong, then try (in a legal or appropriate way) to stop that leader

be your own authority = be your own boss ***You need to be your own authority in this decision, instead of asking your Dad to decide.***

make a demand on/of sb = pressure or require sb to do sth ***Sometimes she makes too many demands on herself.***

Proverbs:

1. Rules are made to be broken. Rules are not to be always followed. Wise people will ask themselves whether a rule really applies to their own situation. If it does not, they will break or “bend” the rule in order to do what seems best at that time.
2. Power corrupts. After people are put in positions of power, sometimes they gradually forget what life is like for ordinary people. They become more likely to abuse their power—and will do “anything” to get more and more power. So don't trust a person who has been in power for a long time.
3. There's an exception to every rule. In some situations, the rule won't be appropriate. Therefore, that situation should be an exception to the rule.

Freedom of choice, self-development, self-esteem, and self-expression are core values in American culture, so there is not much room left for rules and people in authority. In many cultures, proverbs remind people to trust and respect all authority. However, American proverbs teach people to question authority and challenge authority. America began with a revolution that threw off an unwanted authority, and Americans have been opposing people in authority ever since. Most Americans don't want to deny all authority, yet they each want to be their own authority with as little limitation as possible from other leaders in the government, society, family, and workplace. If somebody in authority makes a demand on Americans, they want to know the reason. If the reason does not seem good or necessary, they might say “Rules are made to be broken.” For example, if a child asks his parent, “Why can't I do that?” and the parent replies, “Because I said so,” the child might not obey. In fact, people who question authority are more respected than those who submit to authority without thinking. Americans are also skeptical of rules. Most Americans see rules as limits to freedom. The fewer the rules, the better.

Questions:

1. Do you think it's okay for children to question authority, even their parents' and teachers' authority? Why or why not?
2. Do you agree with the American proverb that rules are made to be broken? If your answer is “sometimes,” explain how you decide which rules to keep and which ones to break. Also, share one rule that you think can sometimes be broken, and share one rule that you think should never be broken. Why?
3. In your culture, how do children usually respond when their parents make demands on them? Also, how much freedom do children have to ask why their parents require them to do something they (children) don't like or want to do?

4. In your culture, how do employees usually respond when their boss makes an unreasonable demand of them? Also, how much freedom do employees have to ask why their boss requires them to do something they don't want to do?
 5. What is one of your most enjoyable forms of self-expression? Why? Examples: sports, painting, dancing, singing, giving a speech/presentation, writing in your diary/journal, discussing or debating something with a friend, etc.
 6. Do you think power corrupts? If so, share 1-2 reasons (or proofs) that power corrupts.
 7. What are 1-2 ways to prevent power from corrupting?
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