

TREAT FRIENDS, KIDS THE SAME

By - Erma Bombeck

On TV the other day, a leading child psychologist said parents should treat their children as they would treat their best friend...with courtesy, dignity and diplomacy.

"I have never treated my children any other way," I told myself. But later that night, I thought about it. Did I really talk to my best friends like I talked to my children? Just suppose...our good friends, Fred and Eleanor, came to dinner one night and...

"Well, it's about time you two got here! What have you been doing? Dawdling? Leave those shoes outside, Fred. They've got mud on them. And shut the door. Were you born in a barn?

"So, Eleanor, how have you been? I've been meaning to have you over for such a long time. Fred! Take it easy on the chip dip or you'll ruin your dinner. I didn't work over a hot stove all day long to have you nibble like some bird.

"Hear from any of the gang lately? Got a card from the Martins. Yes, they're in Lauderdale again. They go every year to the same spot. What's the matter with you, Fred? You're fidgeting. Of course you have to go. It's down the hall, first door on the left. And I don't want to see a towel in the middle of the floor when you're finished.

"Did you wash your face before you came, Eleanor? I see a dark spot around your mouth. I guess it's a shadow. So, how're your children? If you ask me I think summer school is great for them. Is everybody hungry? Then, why don't we go in to dinner? You all wash up and I'll take up the food. Don't tell me your hands are clean, Eleanor. I saw you playing with the dog.

"Fred, you sit over there and Eleanor you can sit with the half glass of milk. You know you're all elbows when it comes to milk. There now, your host will say grace.

"Fred, I don't see any cauliflower on your plate. Have you ever tried it? Well, try a spoonful. If you don't like it I won't make you finish it, but if you don't try it, you can just forget dessert. And sit up straight or your spine will grow that way. Now, what were we talking about? Oh yes, the Gerbers. They sold their house. I mean they took a beating but...Eleanor, don't talk with food in your mouth. I can't understand a word you're saying. And use your napkin.

At that moment in my fantasy, my son walked into the room. "How nice of you to come," I said pleasantly.

"Now what did I do," he sighed.