Off mic with Phil Smith: respect

For reasons beyond fathoming my family is convinced my job is a sinecure - or to put it in their racy idiom "a complete doss". I'm sure that like me you prepare mentally and physically for the incessant demands made by our daily grind, and that you try to peak for that big conference. Clearly it is pressure to which lesser mortals would quickly succumb.

My family refuses to take my need for pre-meeting concentration and tranquillity seriously. I announce at one of our regular family summits (the lure is free alcohol) that I need peace and quiet for preparing the forthcoming meeting on "Snails in the Global Economy" and that I shall partake only of brain food and work hard to release my inner communicator. "Inner gastropod more like," mutters a son. If only I had time to write the little tinker out of my will.

I explain that I need to arrive at the conference refreshed and eager and my whole family falls about laughing, telling me that I'll be able to put my feet up at the meeting, if I have time between the sauna and wallet-singeing restaurant. I decide to phone my mum in her Welsh fastness for some support, explaining that I am in the midst of strenuous preparation for a meeting, and she tells me to speak up because dad has bought another chainsaw which he's testing on the houseplants. I shout the message down the phone.

"Don't worry pet, you'll have a nice rest when you get there".

What's wrong with the kith and kin? I decide to convene another family meeting, this time at 1am on Saturday morning so we have all have a little chat and spend some quality time together. This is known as parenting.

I explain the difficult and demanding schedule, the complex and technical nature of the subject matter and - the clincher to my way of thinking - that fact that I've taken the trouble to learn German and should now reap the rewards. This fails to melt their stony hearts.

Which sets me thinking. Have I brought this disrespect on myself, have I somehow given them the impression that what I do is easy and within the grasp of mortals? As I need peace and quiet to think this through, I tell the family not to bother me as I'm learning Turkish online (I like to plan ahead).

Here are the ideas I've come up with to increase the amount of respect I earn. In future I will avoid:

- Phoning home from the KitKat Klub at 2am
- Taking photos when away from home that show either a swimming pool or palm trees
- Commenting on the food, even if I would prefer larks tongues on a coulis of mashed chirimoya to cod and chips
- Taking any of the family to work with me
- Allowing family and colleagues to chat in my absence
In future my reports on meetings will be bald and factual, stressing the idiosyncrasies of the speakers and lack of oxygen in the booth.

I'm sure the rest of you have found a way to get respect. Could you let me into your secret?

Phil Smith is a UK-based freelance.

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