

CIVILITY (PART 1)

Civility—such a simple word with many meanings! Many meanings include being kind, considerate, courteous, and polite. So many terms of gentleness mark the behavior path to expectations in every leadership capacity! Gentleness is a life skill that shows respect for others and is an expected part of everyday behavior in all facets of our community. Civility lifts people’s spirits and encourages inspiration.

They say that leaders are “logical” – trained to meet the strict principles of validity, reliability, and reason. We know that true leadership—is a science of formal reasoning and good judgment—not merely depending on feelings or opinions. With all this expected logic as an outcome of scientific rationale, leaders are expected to have the wisdom of some of our society’s most intelligent members. Therefore, smart and logical leaders behave civilly. Consequently, it is difficult to forgive the blatant evidence of incivility! A leader’s UNCIVIL BEHAVIOR has been (and continues to be) evident when there is resistance to reason and compromise, unlike the true spirit of the civil leader. You, as a leader, will never regret being kind in all human aspects and all forms of life. Civility allows us to disagree with others without disrespecting others.

Interesting!—There are many words, examples, and ways to show civility; however, we know this without the obvious assertion:

No one has to state whether a person is civil or not civil—you know civility when you see it (or don’t see it). When civility exists, it flourishes with its obvious acceptable behaviors, gentle and accepting voice inflections, calming words, inspirational insights, listening stance, and lack of demeaning inferences!

The American Psychological Association (APA) strongly encourages and supports civility at all teaching and facility/organizational levels. The APA encourages assigning a “Civility Ambassador” to every committee. This person is to be “The Point Person” for civility efforts and encouragement or curtailment of incivility. Use the following APA information to improve civility and know what civility is not as a committee hand-out. Discuss at least yearly in the committee/group setting the following information. The purpose is to keep everyone mindful of civility’s importance and avoid misinterpretations about what is and what is not civility.

The APA Civility Recommended Guidelines are:

What Civility Is:

1. Think carefully before speaking
2. Differentiate and articulate facts from opinions
3. Focus on the common good
4. Disagree with others respectfully
5. Be open to others without hostility
6. Respect diverse views and groups
7. Offer a spirit of collegiality
8. Offer productive and corrective feedback to those who behave in demeaning, insulting, disrespectful, and discriminatory ways

9. Create a welcoming environment for all
10. Focus corrective feedback on one's best and most desirable behavior

What Civility is Not:

1. Interrupting and talking over others who have the floor
2. Overgeneralizing and offering dispositional character criticism and attributions
3. Using language that is perceived as being aggressive, sarcastic, or demeaning
4. Speaking too often or for too long
5. Engaging in disrespectful non-verbal behaviors (e.g., eye-rolling, loud sighs)
6. Offering false praise or disingenuous comment ("With all due respect, but...")

There is a reward for civility and a cost for incivility! Civility, or the lack thereof, affects workplace performance—that is, morale, information processing and problem-solving, work comfort, workplace energy, workplace commitment, safety, unintentional or intentional violence, and causes an increase or decrease in necessary and appropriate communication.

The expectation of civility in the workplace should be a significant part of every employee's job description. A true leader positively reinforces civil behaviors, encouraging a repeat of civil behaviors.

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