

Civility on Campus

Is “rude and crude” on its way out?

A culture of civility. What does that expression mean to you? Could it be a culture where:

- ▲ people return shopping carts to the appropriate area instead of leaving them in the middle of a parking lot?
- ▲ you regularly let others into lines of traffic?
- ▲ a fellow passenger asks you what floor you need to go to and pushes the elevator button for you?
- ▲ people don't engage in complaint-fests?
- ▲ students don't eat disruptively throughout classes or have numerous side conversations during meetings?
- ▲ you get warning from the person in front of you before they lean their airplane seat back?
- ▲ rumors and gossip are not the norm?

An increasing number of campus conversations are centering on issues of civility. Faculty are concerned by student behavior in class and by students who “get in their face.” Rude comments and gossip circles concern students. Staff feel caught in the crosshairs of “supervisor bashing” or dealing with increasingly uncivil phone calls. In short, a growing culture of rudeness is a growing campus concern.

In his book, *Choosing Civility* (2002), Dr. P.M. Forni, the cofounder of the Johns Hopkins Civility Project and a professor of Italian literature at the university, explores not just manners or politeness but *civility*. “Being civil,” he writes, “means being constantly aware of others and weaving restraint, respect, and consideration into the very fabric of this awareness.”

Dissecting an Incident

Talk with your student about incidences of civility and a lack of civility that she has seen on campus.

- ◆ How did she respond, if at all?
- ◆ Does she wish she had responded differently?
- ◆ If so, why?
- ◆ If not, what about her response went well?

Dissecting an incident like this can provide great food for thought—and self-awareness.

The 25 Rules of Considerate Conduct

Dr. Forni shares The 25 Rules of Considerate Conduct, many of which may seem like common sense yet offer a nudge for us all to be more civil beings. His rules include:

1. Pay Attention
2. Acknowledge Others
3. Think the Best
4. Listen
5. Be Inclusive
6. Speak Kindly
7. Don't Speak Ill
8. Accept and Give Praise
9. Respect Even a Subtle “No”
10. Respect Others' Opinions
11. Mind Your Body
12. Be Agreeable
13. Keep It Down (and Rediscover Silence)
14. Respect Other People's Time
15. Respect Other People's Space
16. Apologize Earnestly
17. Assert Yourself
18. Avoid Personal Questions
19. Care for Your Guests
20. Be a Considerate Guest
21. Think Twice Before Asking for Favors
22. Refrain from Idle Complaints
23. Accept and Give Constructive Criticism
24. Respect the Environment and Be Gentle to Animals
25. Don't Shift Responsibility and Blame

As more and more campuses embark upon formal or informal “civility campaigns,” chances are that they'll end up becoming much nicer places to be.