

REAL LIFE SOLUTIONS

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Embracing Civility

Few would argue that our society has become less civil – and the workplace is no exception. Today we can observe a continuum of behaviors and actions that include rude and discourteous behavior, aggression, bullying and even harassment. How often do you have to deal with rude, thoughtless or disrespectful people at work?

Chances are unless you work alone, you find yourself smack in the middle of these situations on a daily basis. But, did you know that you have the power (and bear the responsibility) to remain above the fray? So, how do you look beyond the bad behaviors of others, remain professional and maybe even improve the situation? You do it by embracing civility!

Here are the top ten ways to embrace civility at work:

1. **Remain patient and calm.** You may be tempted to “fight fire with fire” when a co-worker is rude or disrespectful. But, by remaining patient and calm, you can tame even the crankiest critic!
2. **Pick your battles.** It would be disingenuous to agree with everyone on every issue. It’s just not possible. But, when you and a co-worker do disagree, make sure the issue is really important



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to you. Don’t fall into the trap of disagreeing with someone just because you want to be “right.”

3. **You can’t always be right.** If you’re always right, you’re doing something wrong. Try to separate your knowledge from your opinions. Allow others to have their own beliefs and opinions.
4. **Listen.** Did you know that instead of listening to others when they speak, most people spend that time figuring out what they are going to say when the person stops talking? The solution to this is to truly focus and listen to others when they speak. Being a good listener is a strong display of your commitment to embracing civility.
5. **Kick the gossip habit.** Other people at work may continue to gossip; that is out of your control. However, you can make a personal decision to “just say no” to workplace rumors, hearsay and innuendo.
6. **Say please and thank you.** If good manners have fallen out of fashion at your workplace, try becoming the role model for manners. Sit back and watch as others follow your lead.
7. **Search for the “good” in everyone.** You don’t have to like, or even agree with people to get along with them. Find one good thing in everyone you meet. You can mention it or keep it to yourself. Either way, it will change your perspective of difficult people and their behaviors.

8. **Flex your flexibility.** Being flexible means you remain open to listen, to learn and to change—even when change seems difficult or unnecessary.
9. **Acknowledge your mistakes.** No one is perfect. If you make a mistake, own up to it right away. Do what you can to reverse any effects of your mistake. Apologize with sincerity. Accept any criticism you receive as a result. Learn from your mistake and then move on!
10. **Find something (not someone) to laugh about.** Dealing with rude or disrespectful people can leave you feeling exhausted, frustrated and unhappy. Counter these negative feelings by finding something to laugh about!

Remember, even one person’s positive behavior can reflect on others. Take the high road when faced with rudeness and incivility and make a positive impression on those around you.

Crossing a Line

If you feel that rude behavior at work has reached the level of bullying or harassment don’t try to go it alone. You can talk to a human resources representative familiar with your organization’s harassment policies about the best way to address the behavior.

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