

# Is There A Vaccine to Cure Rudeness?

## An Honest Conversation about Civility

### Leader's Guide

USE HF# 54

**Objective:** Define civility, put a face on it, share stories, note changes in civil actions through the years, pack your own Civility Tool Box and become a more thoughtful person.

This Leader's Guide was written for mature adults. If teaching teenagers or young adults tailor the examples of world events in "Where you learned civility" to reflect their lives. Teachers look for ways to role play and allow some time for sharing answers to questions.

#### Supplies and preparations:

Power Point or flip chart for lesson highlights.

Copy activity sheet "Putting a Face on Civil and Uncivil actions", one per audience member.

Put the civility quotes on one page, copy on reverse side of activity sheet OR enlarge as wall art.

#### Props to consider:

Large syringe or a cardboard cutout of one.

Tri-corn hat (three cornered brim, one point in front, two on sides) or big white wig.

Large tool box, write Make, Nurture, Size, Promote and Learn on separate strips of heavy paper.

Key board and cell phone.

## Is There A Vaccine to Cure Rudeness?

### Outline

1. Defining Civility
2. Where you learned civility
3. Putting a face on civil and uncivil action
4. What has changed since George Washington's time?  
How did he interact with his world?  
How do we interact with our world?
5. Cultivating Civility - open your tool box.  
Make a habit of practicing kindness  
Nurture social relationships  
Seize teachable moments  
Promote decency  
Learn how to resolve conflicts
6. Close Mouth Open Ears
7. Feeding the Wolves!
8. Try to Remember How to be Civil

## Is There A Vaccine to Cure Rudeness? An Honest conversation about Civility

*(Teachers, brandish your large syringe)*

Wouldn't you love to walk around with a very large syringe filled with rudeness-curing vaccine?  
How fast would you run out of vaccine?

**A dictionary definition of Civility is short.** It means civilized conduct, courtesy, politeness and respect. The word "Civility" is derived from Old French and Latin for "good citizen".

Yet when people are asked for their definition of Civility picturesque phrases tumble out.

"Well, civility is way more than good manners".  
"It's watching your vocabulary and your body language".  
"It is being blind to skin color".  
"It is playing fair; and not cutting in lines".  
"It's waving with all of your fingers".  
"You stop enjoying putting people in labeled boxes".  
"It is really listening to others without interrupting".  
"It is an attitude of respect, love for our fellow citizens".

**Best definition of Civility:** Civility is the glue that holds society together  
and the lubricant that allows society to dialogue with each other.

### Where you learned Civility

*(Teachers - Ask audience to close their eyes and relax as you slowly read questions. Allow audience to share but watch your time. If people don't respond, share your personal stories.)*

Let your mind drift back to memories of your childhood.

How did your parents, grandparents and neighbors talk to and treat each other?

Do you recall how people reacted in words and deeds to these world events -

The Great Depression

Wars

Segregation and Apartheid

Civil rights marches

Political candidates and elections

*(Teachers - Ask audience to open their eyes)*

Did you learn to recite the "Golden Rule"?

Who were you NOT allowed to play with?

Were any TV shows, movies or books censored by your parents?

***Your first manual for civility was written in your childhood.***

## Putting a Face on Civil and Uncivil Actions

Rank this list of people 1 to 9 on how civil their actions seem to you.  
In your opinion, number one is the most civil, number nine the least civil.

Professional athletes

Politicians

Reality TV stars

Drivers

Disaster responders

People at sporting events

Funeral attendees

Radio talk show hosts

Comedians

## **Putting a face on civil and uncivil actions**

*(Teachers hand out the activity sheet, or put the list on Power Point or a flip chart. Give audience several minutes to finish.)*

Are your top picks thinking of others without getting rewards?

In descending order are your choices thinking more about themselves or their 'tribe' getting more power, money, shocks or laughs?

How many children and adults are watching their actions?

## **What has changed since George Washington's time?**

*(Teachers, if you have a tri-corn hat or white wig now is the time to don it.)*

George Washington, sometime before the age of 16 wrote 110 "Rules of Civility & Decent Behaviour In Company and Conversations". Spelling and punctuation was not standardized in his time.

Here is a glimpse into what young George thought were important rules of civility in 1747.

#2 When in Company, put not your Hands to any Part of the Body, not Usualy Discovered.

#13 Kill no Vermin as Fleas, lice ticks in the sight of others, if you see any filth or thick spittle put your foot dexteriously upon it.

# 65 Speak not injurious Words neither in Jest nor Earnest Scoff at none although they give Occasion.

#110 Labour to keep alive in your Breast that Little Spark of Celestial fire Called Conscience.

***Which ones still apply?***

**How did George Washington interact with his world?** With a quill pen to write, a voice to debate and a horse or carriage to travel the county.

*(If you have two teachers, have one act out the action - frantically typing on keyboard, texting on cell phone, joyful in reading messages, then horrified at the words, shaking head, weeping.)*

## **How do we interact with our world - a world changing at warp speed?**

With heads down, our finger fly over keys shooting out emails, texts, blogs and tweets by the millions. Words of thanks, sharing news and photos, but also anonymous coarse, mean, life-altering bullying words end up on screens.

Writers and speakers spew vulgarity, sensational lies, and polarizing political statements in speeches, printed articles and recycled emails.

What we used to find scratched on bathroom stalls we now hear brazen youth spouting in school halls, on sidewalks and in malls.

Cell phones are treated like microphones - "Can you hear me now?"

At youth sports, parents have to sign a pledge to behave in a civil matter.

Before school concerts, audiences are admonished to remain in their seats until a musical number is finished, to not leave right after their child's part.

## **Cultivating Civility - Open Your Tool Box**

*(Teachers put your large tool box on a table for all to see. Next to the tool box you should have your five strips of heavy paper or cardboard with key word or words on each strip. ( Example: Make a habit) Open your tool box. As you talk about each point put the strip in the tool box.*

1. **Make** a habit of practicing kindness, generosity and gratitude and live a longer, healthier and happier life.

*A good word is an easy obligation, but NOT to speak ill  
requires only our silence, which costs us nothing.*

*John Tilloston, Archbishop of Canterbury*

2. **Nurture** social relationships by balancing Internet contact with face to face visits.

*Be civil to all, sociable to many, familiar with few, friend to one,  
enemy to none. Benjamin Franklin*

3. **Seize** 'teachable moments' with the children in your life to practice respect and empathy for others. Role play age appropriate civil or uncivil incidents. See life through someone else's eyes and ears by changing places with their teacher, parents, or a struggling classmate. Watch TV shows, DVD's and movies with children and be shocked by amount of disrespect shown by children to their parents and peers. *(If there is time ask for examples of teachable moments.)*

*A major study reported that social skills are a more  
accurate predictor of future success than test scores.*

4. **Promote** decency, decorum and civil discourse in community groups. Set an example in your home, work or where you volunteer.

*Civility costs nothing, and buys everything. Mary Wortley Montagu*

5. **Learn** how to resolve conflicts civilly. Resist verbally interpreting other people's behavior but try to understand their perspective. Describe your own feelings. Talk, listen, understand the problem, find a solution.

But, when civility seems to have left the scene and another person verbally attacks, interrupts, demands and over speaks - you have a choice on how you react. Grow quieter and speak more softly, and wait for the outburst to sputter. Point out if there is another lack of civility, the dialog, or meeting is over. If they continue to argue, walk away.

*Civility is the sum of the many sacrifices we are called  
to make for the sake of living together.*

## Close mouth - Open ears

**Experiment.** Have each person choose a partner and decide who is **A**, who is **B**. Look at each other. **A** gets to talk, **B** listens. Now **A** tell your partner you desperately want a large black rose tattoo on your neck and in only one sentence tell them why. Really sell your idea!

*(Allow a minute for chatter, then quiet group.)*

Did anyone use the argument that as you age the wrinkles in your neck will make the rose petals look more realistic?

Now **Bs** were your minds buzzing as you listened? Did you label the talker, judge them? Were you thinking, boy, I'd never do that? Did you want to tell them about large tattoos you've seen?

**There are three ways we listen to others.**

1. **With our little Ego Self** - Quietly labeling the talker, judging them, thinking how we want to reply. Interrupting to share our views.
2. **Use our Rational Thinking Mind** - Remembering it's not about me. I don't have all the answers. Ask questions, inquire, and seek their opinion.
3. **Listen with one's Heart** - really listen with childlike wonder.

**How do you listen to others?** Which ways are the most civil?

Journalist Diane Sawyer said, "I think the one lesson I have learned is that there is no substitute for paying attention".

## Feeding the Wolves!

Here is a story of an old Cherokee teaching his grandson a powerful lesson.

The grandfather says, "My son, there is a battle between two wolves inside us all. One is an Evil wolf. It is anger, jealousy, resentment, selfishness, lies and ego.

The other wolf is Good. It is joy, peace, hope, love, humility, truth, kindness and civility."

The boy thought about it and asked, "Grandfather, which wolf wins?"

The old man quietly replies, "The one you feed."

**Which wolf are you feeding?** Or more aptly, where are you getting the food that feeds your wolf? From the grocery Aisle of Peace and Love, or from the Aisle of Bile and Bitterness?

## **Try to Remember How to be Civil**

**Do not** look down on others - treat them as equals.

**Be sensitive** to the impact of your words and demeanor.

**Listen actively**, don't be afraid to speak up, keep a cool head.

**Seek to learn** and understand another's views, religion, state of mind.

**Rejoice** that you have the freedom to discuss and disagree.

(This quote from two parking garage attendants who escaped Middle East wars.)

**Know** when to talk and when to walk away.

**Share** your knowledge and make a difference in the world.

*The greatest conflicts are not between two people  
but between one person and himself.*

*Garth Brooks*

Written by Anne Engen, Pacific Region Program Coordinator and Marian Hannon, Pacific Region Public Policy Coordinator.

### Resources:

Saving Civility; 52 Ways to Tame Rude, Crude and Attitude for a Polite Planet  
by Sara Hacala

Learning lessons, Cassie Sollars, News-Register

Community Mediation program, Yamhill County, Oregon

Rev. Kent Harrop

[coalitionforabettercommunity.org/quotes](http://coalitionforabettercommunity.org/quotes) on civility

Numerous people who replied to our survey on civility