

Exploring Leadership

SOCIAL AWARENESS: CIVILITY

Civility is what allows us to live peacefully together. It means treating others with decency, regardless of our differences. Most Americans believe Civility has severely decreased over the past two decades. We hear stories daily about ridicule, bullying, and simple rudeness – and these stories are happening not only in homes, classrooms, and on the Internet but also in the halls of Congress and on cable news. It is crucial that we teach young people to be civil to one another.

CONVERSATION STARTER:

- Discuss the 110 Rules of Civility. These guidelines are intended to standardize behavior in pleasant company, suggest appropriate actions and general courtesies.

Civility comes from the Latin word *civilis*, meaning "relating to public life, befitting a citizen," in other words, being friendly and nice to everyone. When you show Civility, you use kindness and good manners. You are respectful, even if you do not like that person very much. Civility can also mean formal politeness, like your behavior at a fancy dinner.

EXPLORATION ACTIVITY:

Hand out Part 1 and give participants time to do their individual rankings. Then divide participants into small groups of 4-5 people. Activity Instructions:

FACILITATION TIPS:

- Ahead of time, look up Rule 7, 48, 49, 50, 51 and 92 from the 110 Rules of Civility. Read aloud and let participants respond.
- See "What You'll Need" box for link to listen to a 7 min. podcast by NPR for talking points and examples of good civility.

KEY OBJECTIVES:

- Recognize common rules of Civility and rank their importance.
- Discuss why Civility is important.

WHAT YOU'LL NEED:

- Copies of the ranking activity sheet (Appendix)
- Pens/Pencils
- <https://www.npr.org/2019/03/12/702011061/in-these-divided-times-is-civility-under-siege>

- Hand out Part 2 and have the groups discuss the importance of each rule.
- Participants should share their individual rankings and explain their reasoning.
- Why are some rules of Civility more important than others?
- Can they be grouped into certain categories? If so, are some categories more important?
- Have each group complete Part 2.
- Reconvene as one large group and share the group rankings.



REFLECTION QUESTIONS:

- How did your individual ranking align with that of your group?
- Do there appear to be certain rules that everyone agrees are/are not important?
- According to all the group rankings, what is the most important rule of Civility on the list? Why is it the most important? (Do you agree?)
- Can you think of another rule of Civility that is more important than any of the ones on the list? If so, explain why.

APPLICATION DISCUSSION:

- Why is Civility important in real life? At school? In 4-H? At work? In politics?
- How can we raise the level of Civility in our immediate environment?
- Who is someone you can make a special effort to be more civil towards?



CONCLUSION:

With the rise of social media and political polarization, Civility seems to be on the decline. Let's see what we can do to change that. Socially well-adjusted people understand the importance of genuine Civility, and it is a crucial skill for effective leadership and socialization. That's why it encompasses many of the other skills in the 4-H leadership curriculum: Self-control, Open-mindedness, Character, Integrity, Self-discipline, Kindness, Patience, Respect, Appreciating Diversity, Humility, Social Awareness, and Cultural Intelligence, To treat others -- especially those with whom we have the greatest differences -- with politeness and respect is the mark of a decent human being.

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REFERENCES

- <https://www.npr.org/2019/03/12/702011061/in-these-divided-times-is-civility-under-siege>
- <https://www.mountvernon.org/education/lesson-plans/lesson/the-rules-of-civility-and-decent-behavior/>
- <https://www.rootsofaction.com/civility-101-whos-teaching-the-class>



APPENDIX:

Part 1: Individual Ranking

Directions: Read the following rules of civil behavior and rank them from 1-10 (1=most important; 10=least important). There is no right or wrong answer. You are ranking the items based on what you think.

- _____ You should eat with your mouth closed and keep your elbows off the table.
- _____ You should place your hand over your mouth when you yawn or sneeze.
- _____ You should turn off or ignore your cell phone while interacting with others.
- _____ You should use the words please, thank you, and excuse me.
- _____ You should share.
- _____ You should not pick your nose in public.
- _____ You should wait for someone to finish speaking before joining in the conversation.
- _____ You should not use foul language or make rude comments in company.
- _____ You should not participate in gossip.
- _____ You should shake a person's hand, look them in the eye, and say, "It is a pleasure to meet you" when meeting someone for the first time.

Part 2: Group Ranking

Directions Share your individual rankings with the group and come up with a group ranking of the rules. When discussing your rankings, provide your reasoning behind your thinking. And, of course, be sure to maintain civility!

- _____ You should eat with your mouth closed and keep your elbows off the table.
- _____ You should place your hand over your mouth when you yawn or sneeze.
- _____ You should turn off or ignore your cell phone while interacting with others.
- _____ You should use the words please, thank you, and excuse me.
- _____ You should share.
- _____ You should not pick your nose in public.
- _____ You should wait for someone to finish speaking before joining in the conversation.
- _____ You should not use foul language or make rude comments in company.
- _____ You should not participate in gossip.
- _____ You should shake a person's hand, look them in the eye, and say, "It is a pleasure to meet you" when meeting someone for the first time.

Be ready to discuss and share your group answers with the class.

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