

civilitysupplement

Forward progress, for small groups and society as a whole, is made when people can agree on their goals and objectives. Civility is a key component to getting along and getting things done. Thinking about and practicing civility will give you a better life. You will become a more interested listener **(I)**, get along better with others **(Us)**, and make it possible for forward progress to occur **(World)**.

I • Us • All

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We are each like a drop of water splashing into a pond. Our actions cause concentric ripples of actions. A helping hand or a smile from one person can ripple through their **relationships** to the **relationships** of others, and so on; until the **world** has changed. The actions of the individual may seem insignificant, but can alter the **world**.



I: Every positive action begins with **Self (I)**, when we discover our ability to effect change and take the initiative to act.



Us: Our impact grows through our **Relationships (Us)**, where we find encouragement as well as challenges.



All: The actions we take impact **the World (All)** around us, where we realize our greatest power and make a lasting difference.

Look for the **I, Us, and All** symbols in your planner and supplements. They mark sections and ideas to help make positive ripples in your **self, relationships, and world**.

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Civility Now

Have you heard this old saying? “You can catch more flies with honey than with vinegar.”

“Gross!” you say, “Who would want to catch flies?” You’re right. But let’s look at what this saying means. The saying means that people (*flies*) are more influenced by kindness (*honey*) than meanness (*vinegar*).

Here is a brief explanation of this saying:

<https://idioms.thefreedictionary.com/>

You+can+catch+more+flies+with+honey+than+with+vinegar.

In life you must often interact and work with people who are different from us. You may even disagree with their different opinions from your families and friends. They and their opinions may be as pesky and unpleasant as flies. How do you continue to relate to these people? Can you just cut them out of your life? The key—the honey—to interpersonal success is civility. **Civility means using good manners, politeness, and courtesy.** This means being on your best behavior even when you are with your friends and family. Acting with civility will earn you respect and trust.

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Be Kind,
Stay Calm

In all interactions, being kind is the best resort. Vinegar—meanness—does not build relationships. When people seem stupid or mean, try to respond with kindness. Name calling and insults reveal more about the speaker than the one insulted. In tense situations, stay calm and keep your voice level. Take deep breaths if you need to. Look the person in the eye in a non-threatening way. If someone says mean things about you, do not care about, you can calmly say, “I know you’re special to me. Please stop,” or “I know that person in a different way. Please stop.” If you can, you might say something kind about the person being insulted.

If you are the one being insulted, again, stay calm. It may be best not to respond at all. If you want to respond, you can say something like, “I wonder why you would say that.” It may turn out that the person is not angry with you, but is taking out his or her anger on you rather than the real target.

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If the person is angry with you, stay calm and hear him or her out. Because we can't see ourselves as others see us, we can learn from honest criticism, though it hurts at the time. If the person is pointing out behavior that you could improve, ask him or her to help you. Then make a plan. When you or the person notice an improvement, thank them for calling you out.

Maybe you see bad behavior in someone. If the person doesn't usually act that way, ask if there's something wrong. If you notice a pattern of bad behavior, call the person out kindly and in private, if possible. (In a bullying, hate speech, or dangerous situation, call out the behavior immediately.) Stay calm and tell the person the behavior you noticed. Then say something like, "Is that how you usually behave?" or "That behavior is unusual for you, is it?"

Dismiss and do not use qualifiers such as "every," "always," "never," and "none," such as "You are always late!" "You never do what I want." Chances are, the person has been on time and has done what you want at least once in a while.

Stick to the facts, but let the other person know your feelings. Say something like, "When you said that, I felt hurt because I try hard to be on time."

What do you do? Dump your best friend, cut ties with your relative, and switch classes? Those may work in the short term, but don't make sense in the long run.

The truth is, throughout your life you will run into people with opinions that differ from yours. Remember that opinions are not facts. You may agree or disagree with people's opinions, but opinions are not provable. They may have some basis in facts, but they also involve emotions and experiences. Here's an example: Jenna thinks The Real Slice is the best pizza place in town. She loves the thick crust and heavy tomato sauce. Jordan disagrees, because Jordan prefers thin crust and lighter sauce. Who is right? They both are, because

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Read a bit more about the difference between facts and opinions here:

<https://www.bmcc.cuny.edu/lrc/studyskills/factsandopinions.pdf>

Test your ability to recognize facts and opinions here:

http://www.softschools.com/quizzes/language_arts/fact_or_opinion/

Be Open

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When you and another person disagree because of different opinions, you have choices. You can argue, listen to each other, or agree to disagree.

You may be shocked to discover that your best friend hates your favorite band or pizza flavor. You may wonder how your relative can support that political candidate. You really wonder how your teacher can think the way he does about classroom rules.

People hold differing opinions on many issues more complex than pizza—issues that don't have one easy answer. When you run into people with different opinions about big topics, try to stay open to what they say. This shows them respect. Stay calm and say something like, "What makes you think that?" or simply, "Tell me more." You may even be able to compliment the person by saying something like, "I appreciate your willingness to discuss

this.” Then you can give your point of view and why you think so. If you can keep the situation calm, both of you have the opportunity to see an issue through someone else’s eyes.

If you want to persuade people to change their minds to your way to thinking, do it respectfully. Think about how you would like to be addressed—no insults, no preaching, no yelling, no threats. Present your opinion calmly, and let the other person decide. Neither person’s opinion may be changed, but you have each given the other something to think about.

choose to focus on what you have in common instead. This ability is especially important among relatives and classmates who you can’t avoid.

After a calm discussion with the other person, you may say, “Can we agree to disagree on this?” Then in future conversations, stick to areas where you do agree. If disagreement comes up, you can remind the person that you agreed to disagree and change the subject.

An anonymous wise person said that before you speak, you should ask yourself three questions: Is it true? Is it necessary?

Living with Differences

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Sometimes you will change someone’s mind, and sometimes you won’t. When you don’t, do you drop that person? That’s up to the two of you, but keeping things friendly is possible when you agree to disagree. That means that you recognize the differences between you, but

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Here is more about what it means to agree to disagree: <https://wonderopolis.org/wonder/what-does-it-mean-to-agree-to-disagree>.

Keep in mind in your discussions, you can grow in your relationships and your maturity. Now keep the honey flowing, and go out and catch some flies!



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