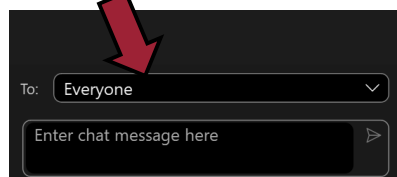
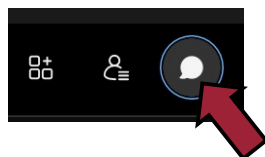


ASHRM Webinar Series

January 17, 2024

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Three Steps Risk Professionals Can Take to Promote a Civil Workplace Culture

Catherine V. Caldicott, MD, FACP
Medical Director, PBI Education

Why Talk About Civility?

- **44% of nurses report experiencing physical violence and 68% report experiencing verbal abuse during the pandemic**

Byon HD *et al.* Workplace Health & Safety. 2022;70(9):412-420
Cited in AHA Brief on Workplace Violence

Why Talk About Civility?

- **Nearly 24% of physicians reported experiencing workplace mistreatment in 2020, including verbal mistreatment or abuse**
- **Any type of workplace mistreatment was associated with statistically significant increases in burnout and decreases in professional fulfillment.**

Rowe SG *et al.* JAMA Network Open. 2022;5(5)

Why Talk About Civility?

- **Rudeness can be contagious: at work, people spread their negative emotions to their colleagues, bosses, and clients—even if those individuals weren't the source of the negativity.**
- **People who witness rudeness are 3x less likely to help someone else.**

Christine Porath, PhD, Georgetown University McDonough
School of Business

Why Talk About Civility?

- **Intimidating and disruptive behaviors can foster medical errors, contribute to poor patient satisfaction and to preventable adverse outcomes, increase the cost of care, and cause qualified clinicians, administrators and managers to seek new positions in more professional environments.**

The Joint Commission Sentinel Event Alert 40 (June 2021)

Why Talk About Civility?

- **Workplace violence is not merely the heinous, violent events that make the news; it is also the everyday occurrences, such as verbal abuse, that are often overlooked.**
- **Examples: threatening, intimidating, harassing, bullying, or humiliating words**

The Joint Commission Sentinel Event Alert 40 (June 2021)

Why Talk About Civility?

- **Negative relationships among ICU physician colleagues were associated with higher burnout scores, but improved relationships between intensivists and nurses were associated with lower burnout scores.**

Embriaco *et al.* Am J Respir Crit Care Med. 2007;175(7):686-92.

Learning Objectives

- Describe the risks an uncivil workplace culture poses to people and institutions
- Apply communication techniques, tools, and skills to prevent, recognize, and respond to uncivil conduct
- List elements of performance improvement plans aimed at recapturing and supporting an ongoing civil workplace culture

What Is Civility?

Why does it matter that hospitals maintain a civil environment?

What Is Civility?

- Civility comes from the Latin: *civilis* = relating to public life, befitting a citizen
- Through 16th c: it meant good citizenship or orderly behavior
- After 16th c: sense of politeness, kindness, good manners
- Being respectful, even if you do not like the other person very much

Vocabulary.com, Wikipedia

What Is Civility?

Researchers have developed a model from empirical data that stresses the notion that civility is a sequence or continuum of increasingly demanding traits:

- indifference > commentary > conversation > co-exploration > habituation

In short, everyone can get better at civility.

Wikipedia

Why Is It Hard to Be Civil?

- **Increases in workload**
- **Staff shortages**
- **COVID fatigue (PTSD)**
- **Conflicting priorities**
- **Lack of understanding of the other person's perspective or job demands**
- **Changing expectations and norms post-COVID**

Good Communication Matters

Without it, a hostile work environment exists:

- **Lower morale, job performance**
- **Lack of cooperation; avoidance of certain tasks**
- **Elevated stress in team, patients, families**
- **Job dissatisfaction**
- **Self-doubt, fears**
- **Sense of victimization; feeling unsafe**
- **Poor medical decision-making, role modeling**

Civility-Communication Connection

- **A civil atmosphere facilitates good communication**
- **Productive communication reinforces a civil atmosphere**
- **Those who model civility and good communication serve as positive role models**
- **Both a civil atmosphere and productive communication convey respect and empathy**

Why Is It So Hard to Communicate Well?

- **The other person might lack effective communication skills**
 - Interruptions
 - Profanity
 - Long-winded
 - Righteous indignation
 - Passive aggressive
 - Disrespectful

Why Is It So Hard to Communicate Well?

- **Mode of communication**
 - Face-to-face
 - Phone
 - Virtual (Zoom, Teams, etc.)
 - Email

Why Is It So Hard to Communicate Well?

- **Power dynamic**
 - Hierarchy
 - Difficulty with authority figures (you)
 - Play by their own rules
 - Accustomed to being in charge
 - Despite their accomplishments, they may feel embarrassed, angry, defensive

Why Is It So Hard to Communicate Well?

- **Communication involves both a MESSAGE (the meaning of the words) and a META-MESSAGE (what the words say about the relationship between the speakers)**
- **Unintended impressions occur due to individuals' different conversational styles**
- **Negative impressions can be triggering**

Civility and Working Remotely

- **Working in one's own space may enhance feelings of safety with physical distance from difficult others**

BUT

- **Difficult conversations over a virtual platform are suboptimal**
- **Working remotely prevents opportunities for nearby colleagues to reinforce your work and debrief readily**

Three Steps

- **Recognize**
- **Respond**
- **Prevent**

Step One: Recognize

- **Cold versus Hot State**
- **First Law**
- **Perspective**

Cold versus Hot State

- **Predictably Irrational**
- **No matter how much experience we have, we make irrational decisions every time we are under the influence of heightened emotions**
- **High-emotion states can cause people to do something they otherwise would not consider themselves capable of.**

Dan Ariely, PhD, Behavioral Economics, Duke University

Cold versus Hot State

- **Cold state is intellectual/analytical**
 - What we are doing now during this presentation
- **Hot state is emotional and immediate**
 - When decisions must be made quickly
 - When emotions are triggered or unsettled
 - Hungry, angry, lonely, tired
- **Hot state moments require cold state thinking**
 - This takes awareness of warning signs and *practice*

“First Law”

Everyone, no matter how smart, well-meaning, well-trained, accomplished is at risk for

- Making a mistake
- Speaking or acting without civility or collegiality
- Doing something unprofessional

This potential is dynamic and changes over time.

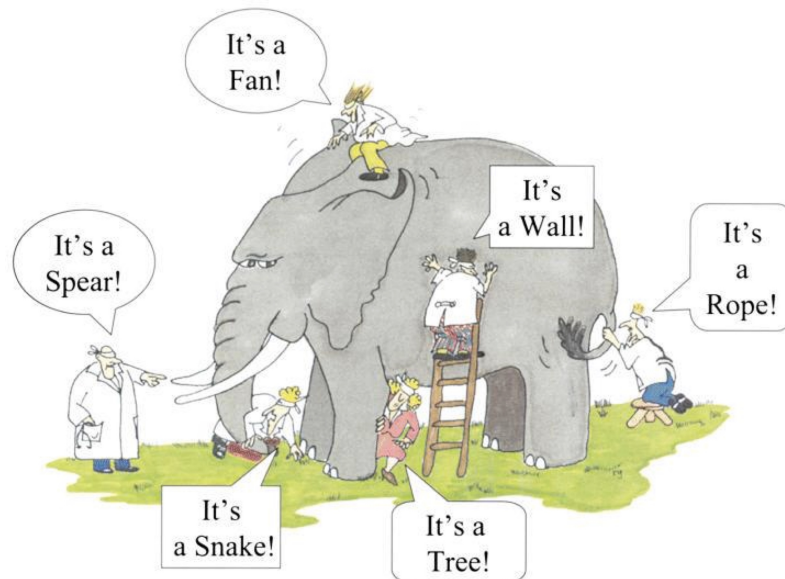
“First Law”

What affects someone’s potential to act in those ways?

- Risks inherent in the type of practice, working conditions
- Personal issues, prior experiences
- Presence or absence of accountability
- Defense mechanisms (denial, rationalization, other-blaming, etc.)
- Crises, transitions, traumas, losses

Perspective

Perspective



Perspective

How perspective applies to civility:

- What is heard or said may be position dependent
- The position may be physical, mental, emotional, role-related, department-related, or hierarchical

Step Two: Respond

- Early interventions
- Performance Improvement Plans (remedial)
- Compassion
- Self-compassion
- Empathy

- There is no bright line separating early from late warning signs of incivility
- One step leads to another: steps down the slippery slope become the new “normal.”
- The farther down the slope you go, the greater the harm to all parties and to their relationships



Early Warning Signs

Micro-aggressions

- **“You speak Spanish? Funny, you don’t look like you would speak Spanish.”**
- **Two white surgeons discussing the merits of the Civil War in the presence of a Black PA**
- **Sarcasm**
- **Eye-rolling**

Early Interventions

- **The cup of coffee with a peer (Vanderbilt)**
 - Response to a single allegation/incident
 - Could be a misperception or problem (investigation)
 - Document this
 - Not for egregious, prohibited, or unlawful conduct
- **Document and track subsequent complaints**
 - Predate the cup of coffee?
 - Apparent pattern?
 - Responsiveness to the cup of coffee?

Early Interventions

- **For patterns (n = 2?)**
- **Immediacy matters!**
 - Reduces the risk that additional wrongdoing will occur
 - Closely connects the intervention with wrongdoing
 - Prevents resistance from becoming entrenched
 - Accelerates practice improvement
 - Hastens the process of repairing/restoring team function and morale

Performance Improvement Plans

- **Include educational interventions to unearth why the risky conduct occurred**
 - Ethics/professionalism
 - Boundaries
 - Civility/communication
- **Coaching**
- **PHP involvement**

Remedial Education

- **Your “remedy”**
- **Should require participants to**
 - Recognize, accept, address the drivers of the uncivil conduct
 - Tell their story—honestly
 - Develop a plan of action for minimizing future risk of uncivil conduct
 - Optional (recommended) follow-up component to ensure compliance with their plan

Compassion

Compassion

- Fundamental human response
- A strong desire to alleviate the suffering of others

Compassionate care

- Linked to better clinical outcomes, lower costs
- Reduces burnout
- Aids in clinician stress management, well-being

Cochrane *et al.* Healthcare Management Forum. 2019;32(3):120-7.

Compassion

- **Can be disarming**
- **Can increase cooperation, remediation potential**
- **Allows a collaborative approach—versus an authoritative one, which might trigger power struggles**
- **Sets the stage for shared goals**
 - Good patient care
 - Patient and workplace safety
 - Efficiency, cost-effectiveness

Self-compassion

Try some compassion for yourself

- *Not* self-pity, complacency, self-care
- A healthy way of relating to yourself when faced with a difficult interaction
- Recognition of our common humanity + mindfulness + self-kindness

Kristin Neff: <https://self-compassion.org>

Empathy

Conveys respect

- Do not interrupt
- Acknowledge the other person's distress
- "I can see you are surprised/upset/frustrated/confused..."
- "Help me understand why you feel this way."

Step Three: Prevent

- **Model civility**
- **Cool off that hot state**
- **Self-control techniques**

Model Civility

Why? Civility is contagious

- Respect
- Compassion
- Self-compassion
- Empathy

Model Civility

Show compassion, model compassion

- Such expressions are meaningful for the hearer and the speaker. Compassion for others has a direct positive effect on your own well-being: it has both a positive effect and counteracts stress pathways and negative emotions.
- An antidote to burnout is personal connection, not escape

Stephen Trzeciak, Compassionomics

Model Civility

- Learn people's names
- Learn one non-work-related thing about the people you work with (but avoid religion, sex, politics, and crossing professional boundaries)
- These things humanize them. And they humanize you.

Cool off That Hot State

- Name it to tame it
- Snow globe technique
- Self-compassion

Name It to Tame It

- **Inventory your feelings—ALL of them**
 - About work itself, home life, relationships, people at work, the traffic, parking, etc.
- **Do this even before you get to work**
- **Do this when someone behaves uncivilly towards you**
- **Naming moves our feelings from the emotion part of the brain to a more intellectual part**
- **This puts you more in control over yourself and your situation**

- “Step out” mentally to see what’s going on
- Mixes the analytical with the emotional



Self-compassion

- **Allows you to *respond* to a situation, not simply *react***
- **Notice what is going on without judging yourself**
- **Protective against your own burnout**
- **If you are not burned out, you will be able to model civility better**

Self-control Techniques

- **8-second Rule**
- **WAIT**
- **Uncomfortableness scale**

8-second Rule

Before you speak, count to 8.

Then count to 8 again.

You can get into a lot of trouble in only 8 seconds.

WAIT

Why am ***I*** talking?

Texting?

Typing?

Uncomfortableness Scale

- Create your own “uncomfortableness” scale
- E.g., Annoyance > irritation > impatience > offense > anger
- Figure out your triggers for all levels
- Pay attention. When you get to the mid-point of your scale, *cool off that hot state.*
 - Step away
 - 8-second rule

Summary

- **Recognize**
 - Cold versus hot state; first law; perspective
- **Respond**
 - Early interventions; PIP (remedial); compassion; self-compassion; empathy
- **Prevent**
 - Model civility; cool off that hot state; self-control techniques

Thank you!

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Our next webinar will be on Tuesday, January 30th at 12 pm Central titled “ASHRM 2024: What to Look Forward To” and featuring Tatum K. O’Sullivan, ASHRM’s President. We look forward to seeing you there.