
November 2011 *LifeSolutions* Corner

“I have been hearing a lot lately about ‘civility in the workplace.’ I’m not sure what that means. Aren’t we just talking about plain, old-fashioned good manners?”

Workplace civility certainly does include what we typically think of as “good manners,” like being polite, saying please and thank you, avoiding interrupting others unnecessarily, holding the elevator door, greeting co-workers in the hallway, and the other interpersonal niceties that make social interactions flow smoothly.

However, there is more to workplace civility; it goes deeper and broader than manners. Baby boomers (and other generations) may remember Eddie Haskell from the old *Leave It to Beaver* television show saying this line: “That is a *lovely* dress, Mrs. Cleaver.” Eddie was using good manners to get on Mrs. Cleaver’s good side. Good manners and politeness can be genuine or used as a way of getting someone to do something for us. Think about how nice teenagers can be when they want a ride to the mall!

Civility, on the other hand, involves truly caring about the well-being and happiness of your fellow workers. It is about being personally interested in how they are doing. A cooperative spirit, respect, and honoring differences are behaviors that demonstrate civility.

Characteristics of a civil workplace:

- ◆ **Inclusiveness:** All are made to feel welcome and a part of the team.
- ◆ **Warmth and friendliness:** There is a sense of being valued and appreciated.
- ◆ **Supportiveness:** Co-workers want each other to do well and are helpful to each other.
- ◆ **Egalitarian treatment:** People are accorded the same level of respect regardless of their rank or status.
- ◆ **Compassion and kindness:** People recognize and work to ease the suffering of others.
- ◆ **Psychological safety:** There is a high level of trust and people feel safe to voice their opinions and concerns without fear of retribution.
- ◆ **Engagement:** Workers are excited about their work experiences and committed to the ongoing success and mission of the organization.

As you strive to make *your* contribution to creating a more civil workplace, these characteristics can serve as guideposts. And yes, having good manners — as a *part* of the greater effort to be truly civil — will be the icing on the cake!

Call us at 1.800.647.3327 to schedule an appointment or telephone session with one of our counselors for coaching on civility. Our website, www.lifesolutionsforyou.com, has information on topics related to civility, like communication and diversity. Click on the *WorkLife* portal log-in and enter your company code. Call us if you don’t know your company code.

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