



CIVILITY

What is it? What isn't it? Why is it important?

Introduction

- Kelley Packer - Executive Director for the Association of Idaho Cities
- Former City Councilmember & State Legislator
- Facilitator for National Institute of Civil Discourse - Next Gen
- National Co-Chair for Next Gen 2021-2022
- Founder & Co-Host of In Search of Civility 2021-2023
- Civility Failure & Success Story

An Online, National Survey by Pinkston (DC-based agency) conducted January 21-27, 2025, shows:



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- ▶ 52% believe our democracy is weaker today than in the past due to incivility
- ▶ 73% believe we tolerate outrageous and uncivilized behavior by elected official's more today than in the past
- ▶ 83% expect government leaders to find common ground across political lines
- ▶ 72% of Americans are interested in being a part of the solution to restore civility and find common ground



What is civility?



What isn't it?

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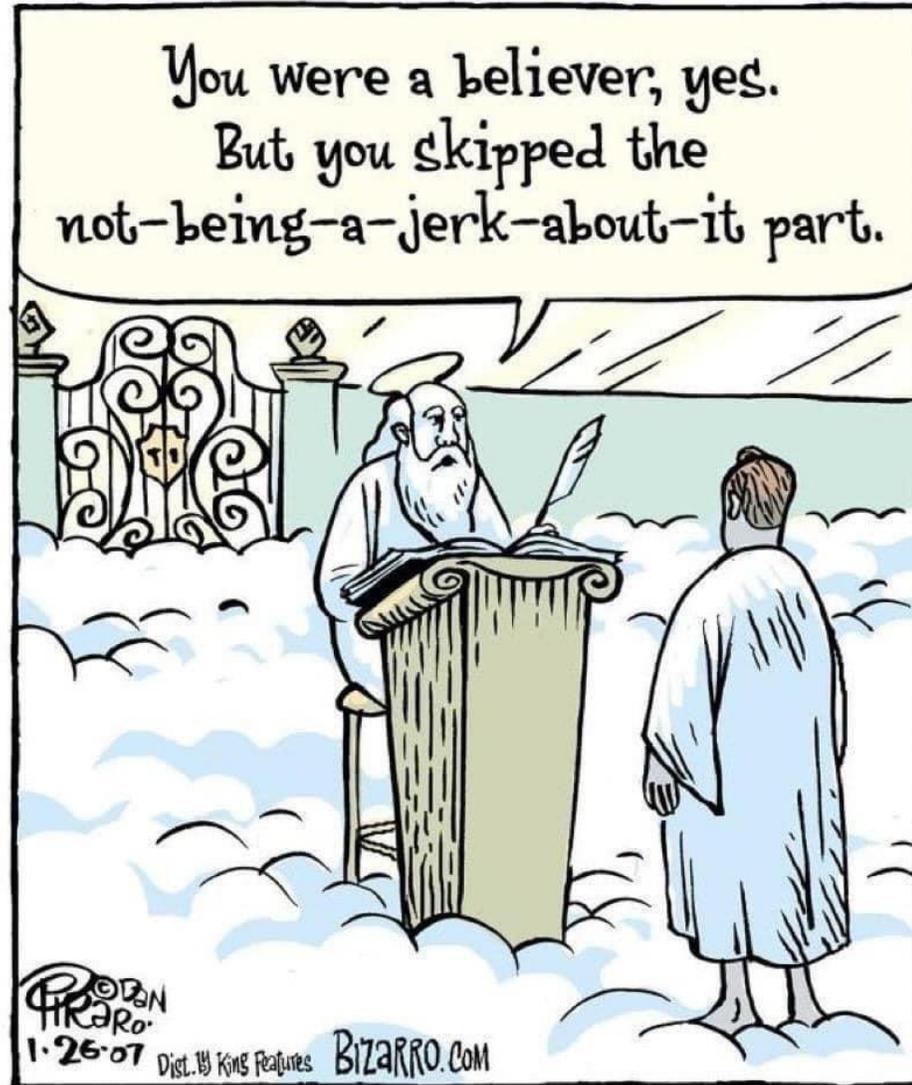
Why is it important?

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Who is Responsible for Civility?

Being passionate is fine, but you still have to play nice...



Quote: “One reason we rush so quickly to the vulgar satisfactions of judgement, and love to revel in our righteous outrage, is that it spares us from the impotent pain of empathy, and the harder, messier work of understanding” Tim Kreider, *We Learn Nothing*

EMPATHY VS. SYMPATHY



Personal Journeys

- ▶ Our pasts mold us
 - ▶ Upbringing/teachings
 - ▶ Experiences
 - ▶ Relationships
 - ▶ Hobbies/Interests
- ▶ Similar journeys can produce different results
- ▶ Hard to hate someone you know
 - ▶ Get to know people
 - ▶ Find Common Ground



What is your favorite color?



What is your favorite leisure activity?



What is your eye color?



Do you have children?



Do you have grandchildren?



Why do you serve in your city?

We are all very different: interests, experiences, education, priorities...

► And that's without talking about gender, race, ideology, or anything else, BUT...





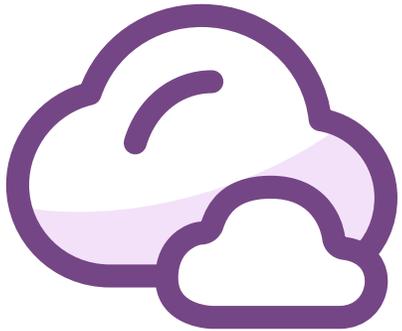
**Do you want you and your family
to have enough to eat?**



Do you want you and your family to have a safe, warm, secure place to sleep and live?



**Do you want to be appreciated
and understood in your home and
at work?**



Have you ever felt nervous before something important?



Do you hope your life will make a difference or have a positive impact?

So, let's assume good intentions and take the time to get to know people, remembering that...

**Where it matters most,
we are the same!!**

We may develop some unlikely friendships.



Leaders have a responsibility to set the standards...to unify!

Is Civility the core value of the city itself?

Great leaders lead by example and set the tone

In meetings

At events

Speaking/Presenting...Especially with our youth

With staff

Everyday conversations/communications

Don't walk in front of me...I might not follow

Don't walk behind me...I might not lead

Walk beside me and be my friend!

Good communication is key to engaging with others civilly.

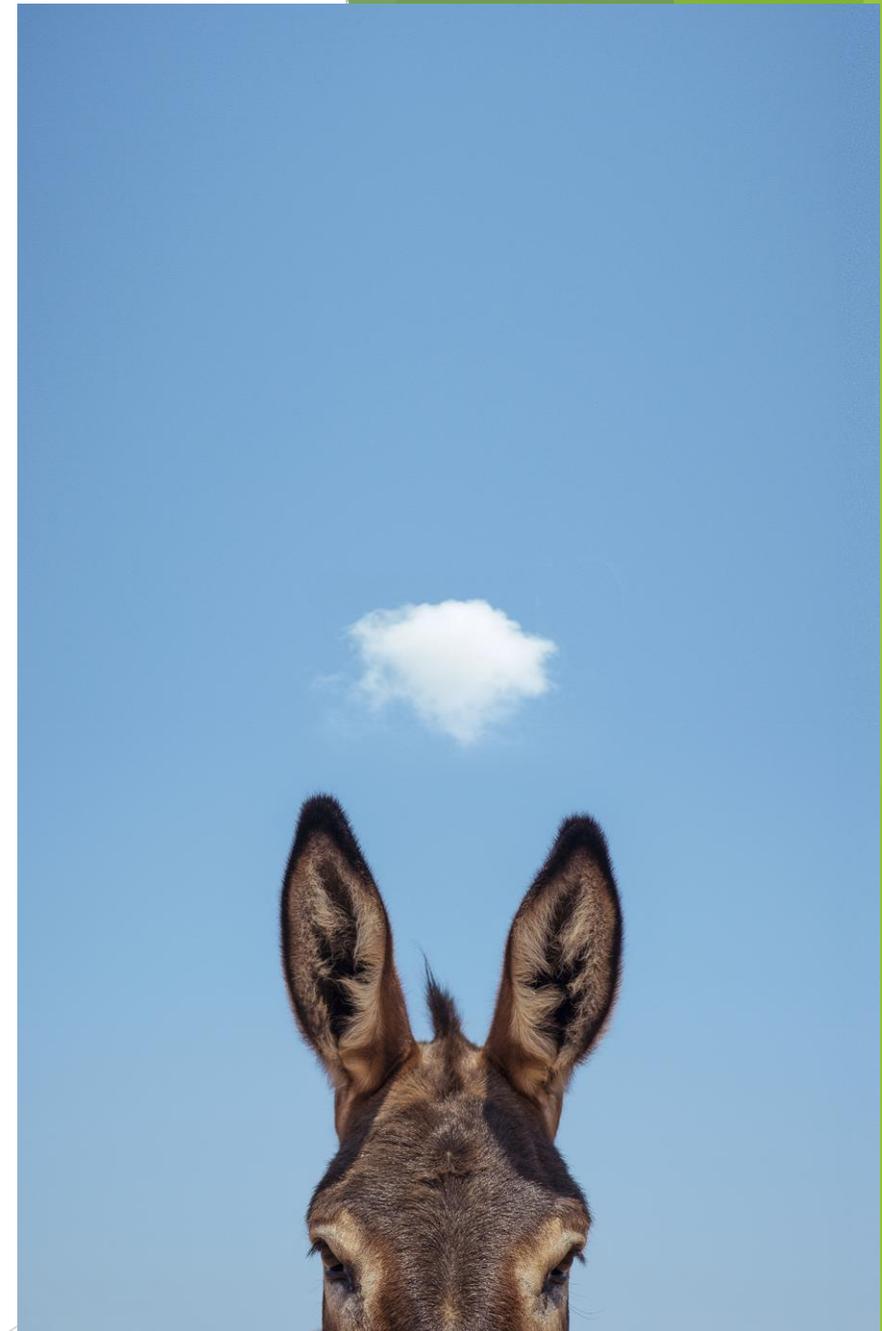


15 Effective Communication Techniques

1. Offer a genuine smile
2. Ask the right questions
3. Practice active listening
4. Give (and receive) feedback
5. Destress and calm down
6. Empathize with others
7. Choose your words carefully...be concise and clear
8. Show keen interest
9. Keep your sense of humor
10. Notice your body language
11. Remember the Golden Rule
12. Harness the power of silence
13. Use the other person's name
14. Keep your ego under control
15. Avoid information overload

Practice Active Listening

- Everyday we have conversations with others, and we can always practice civility
- Seek to have free and respectful exchange of ideas...especially diverse ideas; “Be brave enough to start a conversation that matters.”-Margaret (Meg) Wheatley
- Don’t have to agree, but we do have to disagree respectfully
- Practice active listening...give others the opportunity to state their opinions without interruption
- Ask good questions - Get curious, not furious
- As you listen, contemplate (and allow) 3 things:
 - You may not know everything
 - You may be mistaken in what you “know”
 - They may have some good ideas



Check the Narrative

- ▶ Narratives can divide us, but they can also bring us together.
- ▶ Narratives that villainize the other side creates division.
- ▶ Don't pinpoint someone to blame but rather identify the problem and what are viable solutions.
- ▶ Strip away the villains and find heroes instead.



An Attitude of Gratitude

- Life is far from perfect. Things happen that cause us to react negatively
- Have a pity party, but make it short and don't make it public
- Get outside your problems and look at the big picture
- Realize that others are hurting, too (Life happens to all of us!)
- Give thanks...to everyone and everything
- Even on the bad days, find the silver lining
- Melody Beattie says, "Gratitude unlocks the fullness of life. It turns what we have into enough, and more. It turns denial into acceptance, chaos into order, and confusion to clarity."
- Hard to be mean when you're grateful for all around you...including differences
- It's never too late to start!!!

Be an ‘Upstander’

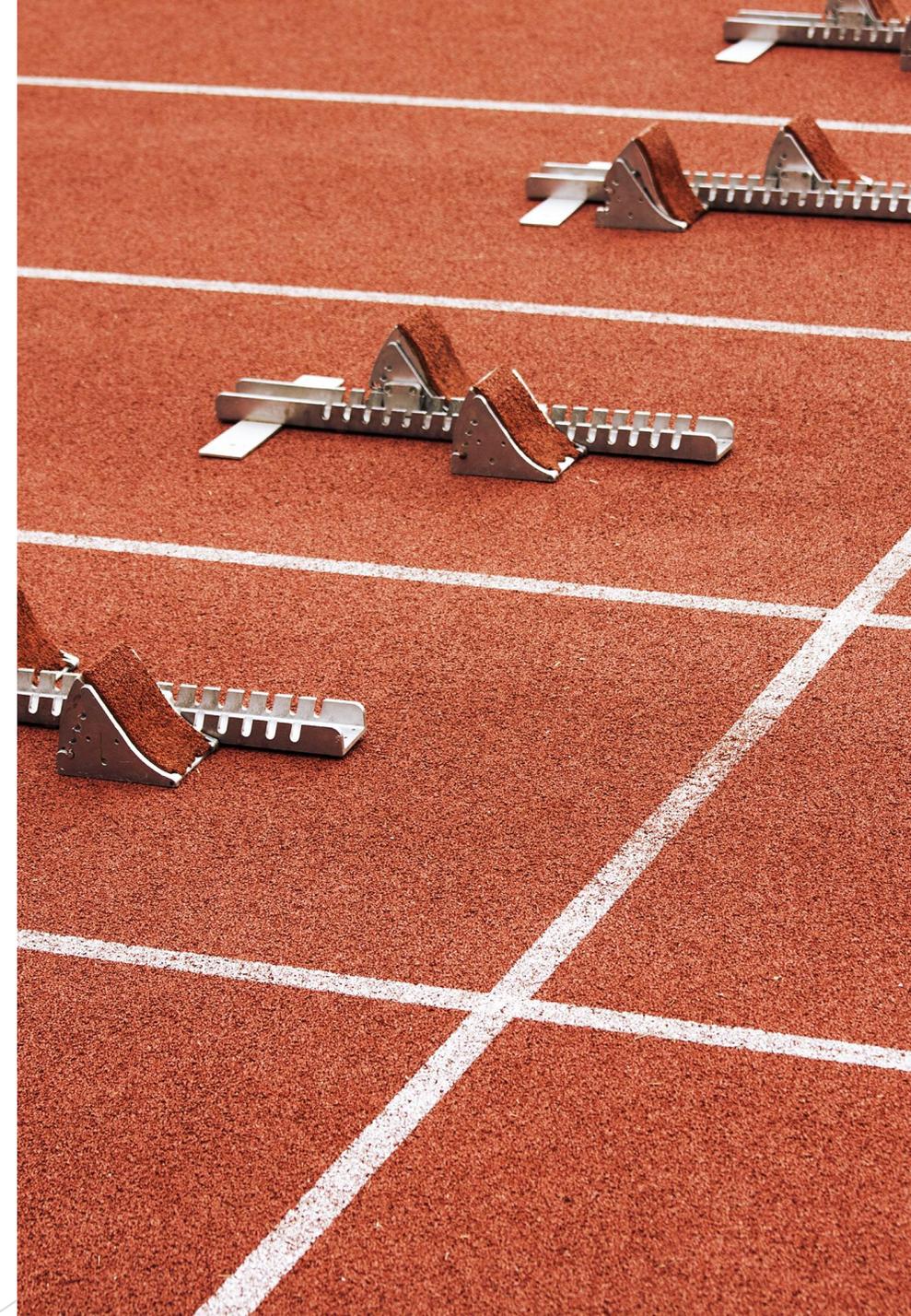
Be An ‘Upstander’ Not A Bystander

Every single day we each have the opportunity to make... our world better. Ending incivility is everyone's responsibility. An “upstander” is someone who recognizes something is wrong and then acts to put it right. An upstander holds individuals accountable for their actions and actively promotes an environment where all individuals feel safe and supported. This can be achieved by keeping your poise and being assertive. By expressing yourself with determination and politeness you may not stop the perpetrators of bad behavior, but the visible support you have shown can have more impact than you realize.

*Yasmin Carter Ph.D. is an Assistant Professor of Translational Anatomy at the University of Massachusetts Medical School. She is a former Chair of the UMass Med Civility Committee.

Know when to walk away, know when to ...

- Choosing your battles wisely is so important
- If you should stand firm, are you in a place and time when it's appropriate?
- Will taking a stand help or hurt you or others?
- T - Is it True?
- H - Is it Helpful?
- I - Is it Inspiring?
- N - Is it Necessary?
- K - Is it Kind?
- Disagreement can be productive
 - Thomas Jefferson - "A little rebellion, now and then, is a good thing."
 - I would add BUT ALWAYS BE NICE!



Caring for Yourself While Caring for Your Community

- It's hard to be civil when we're run down, tired and mentally spent.
- Recognize when you or others may need to take a break.
- Take a break and regroup. Even short breaks can improve our attitude.
- Review and recalibrate.

The Mental Health Continuum

Thriving "I got this."	Surviving "Something isn't right."	Struggling "I can't keep this up."	In Crisis "I can't survive this."
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Calm and steady with minor mood fluctuations• Able to take things in stride• Consistent performance• Able to take feedback and to adjust to changes of plans• Able to focus• Able to communicate effectively• Normal sleep patterns and appetite	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Nervousness, sadness, increased mood fluctuations• Inconsistent performance• More easily overwhelmed or irritated• Increased need for control and difficulty adjusting to changes• Trouble sleeping or eating• Activities and relationships you used to enjoy seem less interesting or even stressful• Muscle tension, low energy, headaches	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Persistent fear, panic, anxiety, anger, pervasive sadness, hopelessness• Exhaustion• Poor performance and difficulty making decisions or concentrating• Avoiding interaction with coworkers, family, and friends• Fatigue, aches and pains• Restless, disturbed sleep• Self-medicating with substances, food, or other numbing activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Disabling distress and loss of function• Panic attacks• Nightmares or flashbacks• Unable to fall or stay asleep• Intrusive thoughts• Thoughts of self-harm or suicide• Easily enraged or aggressive• Careless mistakes and inability to focus• Feeling numb, lost, or out of control• Withdrawal from relationships• Dependence on substances, food, or other numbing activities to cope

Tips for Improving your Mental Health

- ✓ Get a good night's sleep
- ✓ Eat mindfully
- ✓ Drink enough water
- ✓ Meditate for 5 to 10 minutes
- ✓ Write a thank you note or make a thank you call
- ✓ Go for a walk
- ✓ Put down your phone for an hour or two
- ✓ Write a gratitude list
- ✓ Other ideas in **Wellness Book**...find what works for you, then write it down for future reference



Be realistic

“The goal isn’t to get rid of all your negative thoughts and feelings - that’s impossible. The goal is to change your response to them” Mel Robbins



Colonel Dede Halfhill; USAF

C - Communicate to Connect

H - Harness our own humanness; Empathy is good, don't hide it

O - Own our Vulnerability; Don't outrun it. When you know yourself, you are empowered. "When you accept yourself, you are invincible." - Tina Lifford

I - Ignite courage in others; Model courage, don't suppress it. Courage is fear in action.

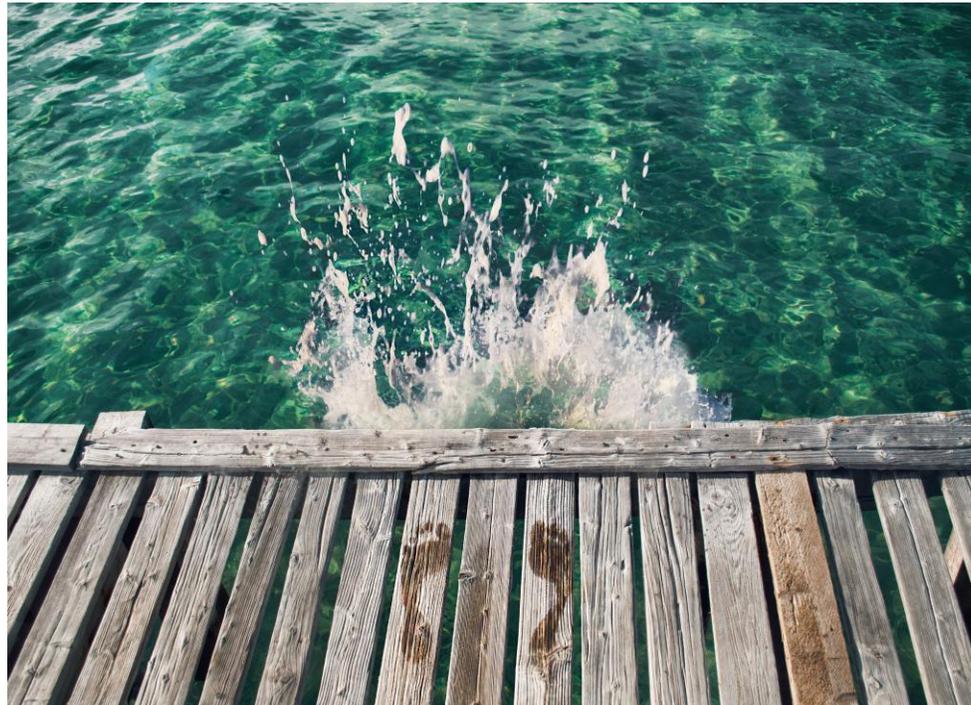
C - Check our Fabulousness; Don't chuck it.

E - Embrace the Chaos; It's going to exist.

First Steps

Give yourself and all around you more grace,
then...

Make a commitment to civility in your city!



City Commitment

CIVILITY
RESPECT
SOLUTIONS

Conduct Effective Meetings

- Set the tone/expectation at the beginning of the meeting

 - No swearing or foul language

 - No attacking anyone, including city staff, elected officials or audience members

Communicate Thoughtfully

- Be open, honest and transparent (making sure everyone has access to the same universe of facts)

Build Relationships

- Cultivating trusting relationships with others involved in an issue takes time, but is worth the effort and will payoff in the long run

Adopt a Civility Pledge

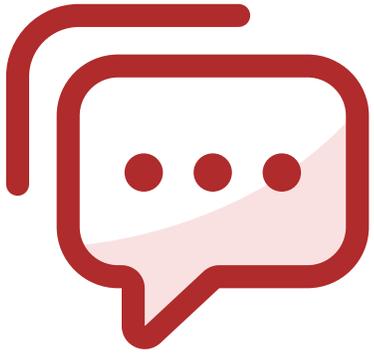
The (City of Hometown) pledges to practice and promote civility within the governing body.

The elected officials of the (City of Hometown) enact this civility pledge to build a stronger and more prosperous community by advocating for civil engagement, respecting others and their viewpoints, and finding solutions for the betterment of the (City of Hometown).

This pledge ensures all communication - both spoken and written - to be open, honest and transparent as this is vital for cultivating trust and relationships.

This pledge ensures mutual respect to achieve municipal goals, recognizing that patience, tolerance and civility are imperative to success.

This pledge ensures opportunities for finding common ground and engaging in civil discussion to seek solutions while actively listening and thoughtfully participating.



Audience Q&A

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Contact Information



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