



# The Power of Civility

**Top experts reveal the secrets of social capital**

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Cindy Ann Peterson • Denise Pietzsch • Shelby Scarbrough  
Anita Shower • Cheryl Walker-Robertson**

# The *Power* *of* Civility

**Top Experts Reveal  
The Secrets of Social Capital**





***THRIVE Publishing***

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## *Dedication*

We dedicate this book to you, the  
empathetic and caring person who  
recognizes the need for considerate conduct  
in everything you do.

We salute you for embracing civility in your  
personal and professional life—and we  
celebrate your commitment to  
being the best you can be!

**The Co-Authors of *The Power of Civility***



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# *Acknowledgements*

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This book is the brilliant concept of Caterina Rando, the founder of THRIVE Publishing.™ As a respected business strategist who works with image, etiquette and civility professionals to grow their businesses, she realized how much she was learning about the importance of civility in all aspects of business and personal life. Wanting more people to benefit from this wisdom, she asked us to put our tips and strategies into this comprehensive book.

Without Caterina's "take action" spirit, her commitment to excellence and her highly-skilled professional publishing team, you would not be reading this book, of which we are all so proud. Our truly dedicated team worked diligently to put together the best possible book for you. We are truly grateful for everyone's stellar contribution.

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We also acknowledge each other for delivering outstanding information, guidance and advice. Through our work in this book and with our clients, we are truly committed to enhancing peoples' lives through the skills and practice of civility. We are truly grateful that we get to do work that we love and make a contribution to so many in the process. We do not take our good fortune lightly. We are clear in our mission—to make a genuine contribution to you, the reader. Thank you for granting us this extraordinary opportunity.

**The Co-Authors of *The Power of Civility***

# *Introduction*

***“Civility costs nothing and buys everything.”***

—Lady Mary Worley Montagu, English aristocrat and writer

Congratulations! You have opened an incredible resource, packed with great ideas that will guide you to an improved way of being in the world. The need for civility in all aspects of our lives has been advocated in nearly every form of media. You can make a significant difference in your own life, and in the lives of everyone you interact with, when you adopt the principles we discuss in this book. You are about to discover *the power of civility*.

We know you want to be the absolute best you can be. Your success in your business and personal life will be determined by how you greet people, respond to invitations, react to difficult situations or treat those who disagree with you. In fact, your success is determined by the way you present yourself in *all* that you say and do!

As top experts in etiquette and civility, we have joined together to give you the most effective strategies we know to help you deal with almost any situation with civility. Some bits of advice are repeated in different chapters—that should tell you how important that advice is!

Each of us has seen how even small shifts toward greater civility can transform one’s self-confidence and uplift one’s spirit. When you demonstrate kindness, consideration, thoughtfulness, respect, self-

restraint and responsibility, people are drawn to you. When they mirror civility back to you, everyone enjoys a sense of goodwill and heightened self-worth.

All the civility professionals you will meet in this book want you to have the confidence and poise to go anywhere and be welcomed as a caring and considerate citizen of the world. We have shared our best tips and proven guidelines to help you fit in, and to help you put others at ease.

To get the most out of this book, we recommend that you read through it once, cover to cover. Then go back and follow the tips that apply to you, in the chapters most relevant to your current situation. Every improvement you make will make a difference in how you feel about yourself, how you relate to those around you and how others respond to you in your daily personal and professional life.

Mastering all the aspects of civility and considerate conduct can take some time. If you take action and continually apply the strategies, tips and tactics we share in these pages, you will reap many rewards. With our knowledge and your action, we are confident that, like our thousands of satisfied clients, you too will master *the power of civility*.

**The Co-Authors of *The Power of Civility***

# The *Power* of One

## Choosing Civility

By Lew Bayer

*W*hether we are talking about a table-setting or a handshake, the rules and rituals of etiquette have long held value. As early as 2500 B.C. with the first known manners guide, *The Instructions of Ptahhotep*, people have understood the technical aspects of courtesy. Choosing to follow the rules for dining, for entertaining, and for interacting socially and in business has always been a necessary element of social polish. Manners make it easier to live and work together, and there may be no serious damage done if you are just being polite out of habit. For example, maybe you always send a thank you card, even if you do not like the gift you received, or you always accept invitations, even when you know you have no intention of actually attending an event. However, as in these examples, exhibiting manners just for the sake of being polite is not really all that civilized. Following prescribed social conventions out of some sense of obligation, or being courteous just because you are directed to do so by some person or circumstance, without some measure of understanding and good intentions, is not nearly the same as choosing and practicing civility.

***“Rules cannot take the place of character.”***

—Allan Greenspan, former chairman, U.S. Federal Reserve

## The *Power* of One \_\_\_\_\_

Teaching and practicing rules for manners and modern-day etiquette is relatively easy. Teaching and practicing civility is significantly more difficult. Some experts argue that because civility is the outcome of choosing behaviors that are congruent with positive personal values, you can teach a person how to make decisions, or you can teach someone about consequences. However, you cannot, in fact, teach civility. This is a long-debated issue and part of the reason many training professionals focus on changing manners and behaviors rather than trying to change attitudes, values or beliefs.

Unfortunately, many parents, teachers, and sometimes society in general, expect forced compliance and confuse it with civility. For example, a child can be taught to say “Sorry” but never learn why it is important to apologize and never understand what he or she did wrong in the first place. The child simply learns that you can do whatever you want and if someone gets mad, just say “Sorry” to get yourself out of trouble. Similarly, just because people smile and shake hands politely does not mean they actually respect or appreciate each other. The amount of attention and intention required to do something “just because” is far less than the amount of attention and intention required to do something with conscience. This difference explains the seemingly subtle difference between being polite and being civil. When courtesies are regularly extended without sincerity, the result is mistrust. When trust is diminished, social capital is depleted. Social capital is the extent to which we are connected to one another and it is an important byproduct of civility.

Choosing the right action, weighing the potential impact of choices against one’s own values, and being accountable for the outcomes of those choices are what build character. It’s character that distinguishes mannerly actions from civility. Abraham Lincoln said, “Reputation is the shadow. Character is the tree.” To compare, civility is what compels you to do the right thing just because it is right to do what’s right. This

belief is an aspect of your true self, part of your character, whereas manners can easily and often be exhibited simply as a means of sending a positive impression or appearing to be good.

While manners exhibited for any reason usually have some positive impact, when you exercise the power of choice and determine to extend a courtesy or some small kindness because you believe it is the right thing to do, the power of intention takes over, and intention is a very powerful thing. When you consistently choose actions based on your values and purposefully behave in a way that benefits others, civility becomes a point of your character.

## **Defining Civility**

There are a range of dictionary definitions for civility—most of these refer to the obvious connection between manners and courtesy. However, these simple definitions do not accurately capture the attitudinal and values component so important to the practical applications of civility. The following expanded definition of civility helps to capture those complexities.

Civility is:

- A **conscious awareness** of the impact of one's thoughts, actions, words and intentions on others; combined with
- A **continuous acknowledgement** of one's responsibility to ease the experience of others (for example, through restraint, kindness, non-judgment, respect, and courtesy); and
- A **consistent effort** to adopt and exhibit civil behavior as a non-negotiable point of one's character.

Etiquette guidelines, which incorporate manners, represent the rules or conventions that apply to a situation, a time, a culture or a country.

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Civility represents the overriding values and character of an individual. When groups of individuals share the same core values, those values create the character or culture of a family, an organization, and even a nation. When you do not have clearly-defined values, it is difficult to establish personal standards, and so it is easier to choose popular actions based on convenience rather than choose civility based on conscience. The end result is incivility.

### **Causes of Incivility**

The following are commonly understood to be factors that engender rudeness and disrespectful behavior:

- Chronic stress
- Growing fearfulness about the future
- Constant technological advances and changes
- Decreased moral intelligence resulting from mainstream media
- Shifts in values across and among generational groups
- Cross-cultural incompetence
- Low social intelligence
- Undefined values
- Discomfort adapting to change
- Ongoing situational factors such as environment and context
- Ineffective communication
- General lack of personal integrity
- Limited incentive to do the right thing

Karl Albrecht, a well-known futurist and expert in the field of social intelligence, describes persistent rude behaviors as toxic. Toxic and

disrespectful behaviors are often contagious. When allowed to do so, rudeness spreads like a virus and wreaks havoc on health, productivity, self-esteem, and relationships. Left unattended, the incivility virus quickly becomes a social epidemic, at which point treating the behavioral symptoms is barely manageable. Given that recent public opinion polls showed that 69 percent of respondents agreed that people are getting ruder, it is safe to say we are facing incivility in epidemic proportions. Toxic workplaces are examples of how difficult it is to contain incivility viruses and how offering temporary solutions such as more rules and harsher consequences does not work; the symptoms of incivility always return when the proverbial band-aids fall off. The only solution is consistent, pre-emptive efforts to build core values as immunization against the disease of incivility.

### **Why Choose Civility?**

The better question is “Why not choose civility?” The benefits of civility are many. Some benefits such as personal confidence, trust and social capital are immeasurable. The costs of incivility can be significant, too, and they are often immutable.

Cell phone rudeness, chronic lateness, bullying, unprofessional dress, employee theft, poor customer service . . . the statistics on incivility are alarming and endless. Disrespect and discourtesy are prevalent across the country and, according to many experts, incivility is systemic and epidemic. If there was ever a time when the world needed change, the time is *now*.

If world-scale incivilities—such as war and crime, political leaders’ public temper tantrums, professional athletes’ very unsportsmanlike conduct, over-the-top celebrity self-indulgence, rampant bigotry and racism—do not have you convinced, consider how many of the

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following symptoms of viral incivility you have experienced in your own home, workplace or community in the past two weeks:

- Persistent miscommunication, such as non-responsiveness, misunderstandings, arguments, withholding of information, diminished morale and/or mood, negative attitudes, lack of energy, poor engagement, lowered confidence and measurable lack of accountability
- Decreased productivity, increased lateness and laziness, reduced quality and quantity of output, diminished collaborative effort
- Increased customer service complaints, visible decrease in product and/or service standards
- Growing gap in alignment between personal or corporate goals and leadership's abilities, lack of integrity and ethics
- Inability to adapt effectively to change
- Inability to navigate cultural and communication barriers
- Increased difficulty recruiting and hiring competent personnel
- Difficulty identifying and practicing core values
- Lowered common sense, failure to attend to social cues and follow social conventions
- Increased disengagement, difficulty maintaining relationships, less involvement in social, civic and community events

Research shows that typically social capital, self-worth, productivity, health, and certainly profitability in business settings all increase when you choose civility.

In spite of what would seem a growing awareness of the tangible costs of rudeness as well as an obvious need for fostering manners and respect, you may be wondering why so few people are choosing civility. Part of the reason is that when people begin to understand

that being civil is not as simple as attending an etiquette class or as obvious as being polite, they simply are not prepared to commit the time or energy civility requires—or they lack the courage to choose civility when there seems no expectation, respect or reward for doing so.

### **What it Means to Choose Civility**

There are approximately 20,000 seconds in each waking day. This means that on any given day you have up to 20,000 opportunities to choose civility. It just takes one second to make a difference. With one choice, one word, one kind gesture, one moment of consideration, you can change someone's life. In one committed moment of courage you can show your true character. *You* have the power to create positive, lasting change simply by choosing civility.

The first step to choosing civility is to clearly identify your personal values because your values drive your choices. For example, if you value honesty, kindness, compassion and integrity, you have to be prepared to walk and talk those values consistently, even when doing so may not be comfortable or convenient for you. Dr. P.M. Forni, a Professor of Civility at Johns Hopkins University and author of the bestselling book, *Choosing Civility*, published in 2003 by St. Martin's Griffin, suggests 25 modern-day guidelines for considerate conduct, including paying attention, being inclusive, rediscovering silence and speaking kindly. Dr. Forni emphasizes that respect, restraint, and responsibility are the foundational values upon which choices are made, and he suggests that “a critical measure of our success in life is the way we treat one another every day of our lives.”

Choosing civility means that in expressing manners, you do so with purpose and have an understanding of the value of the rules beyond mere social requirements. For example, having the whole family sit at the table for dinner is not so much about acting civilized as it is about

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choosing to take time to be together, to laugh, to tell stories, to connect in some small way.

Inviting guests over and making them feel welcome is a way of opening your heart, not just your front door. It is a way of letting people know that you are interested in sharing with them—food, the comforts of home, and maybe some conversation. Looking someone in the eye and extending a handshake tells that person that you choose to take a minute out of your busy, tired, stressful day to show another human being that he or she has value.

In addition to making values-based choices on purpose, conscious awareness is an important aspect of choosing civility. You have to pay attention to the impact your choices, words, actions, and even lack of actions, have on others. It means using your social radar to assess the needs of others and building your social competence to accommodate those needs. You need to be able to interpret verbal and nonverbal cues, to adapt your behavior based on appropriateness in specific contexts.

***“To know what is right and not to do it is the worst cowardice.”***

—Confucius, Chinese philosopher

Choosing civility means having the courage to consider how your actions impact others, and to do the right thing, even when your own physical or emotional comfort is at stake. Choosing civility requires taking responsibility for the experience of others and acknowledging that *everyone* deserves respect. You have a responsibility to be civil and kind to everyone, regardless of any benefit to yourself and regardless of whether you have a relationship or the same values as another person. James D. Miles captures the notion of conveying kindness and respect as follows, “You can easily judge the character of a man by how he treats those who can do nothing for him.” Dr. Forni states that beyond

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*Lew Bayer*

an attitude of benevolence to individuals, choosing civility entails “an active interest in the well-being of our communities and even a concern for the health of the planet on which we live.”

Choosing civility means having the courage to expend the time, money or energy required to be civil. Civility is its own reward. When you extend respect and courtesy just because it is the right thing to do, when you exercise non-judgment, and when you relinquish any expectation of reciprocation for kindnesses you may offer, there is an authenticity and spirit of generosity, a graciousness that is expressed.

***“Civility has two parts; generosity when it is costly,  
and trust, even when there is risk.”***

—Stephen L. Carter, American law professor and author

Choosing to give your time, resources, attention, well-wishes, love, kindness and respect, with no expectation of return, has tremendous benefit to you as the giver as well as to the recipient.

## **Getting Started:**

### **What You Can Do to Foster Civility Right Now**

When was the last time you sent someone flowers anonymously, and for no reason except to let that person know that he or she was appreciated?

Can you recall a time recently when you chose to give someone who had wronged you the benefit of the doubt, and offered him or her kindness instead of issuing a barbed comment or demanding an apology?

How often do you take time to do the little extras: set a pretty table, hand write a thank you card, reach out to a new neighbor, offer a heartfelt compliment, or extend some other seemingly small gesture to

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make life a little easier for someone else—even when it costs you your own time, money or energy to do so?

It does not take much to facilitate change. Consider, for example, how water that is just hot at 211 degrees suddenly boils at 212 degrees. One almost unnoticeable increment can significantly change the whole nature of a thing. In that same way, one person choosing civility has the power to change another person's sense of value, the tone of a communication, the course of a relationship, or the outcome of a seemingly difficult situation. What are you doing right now to foster civility?

In one minute, through one small gesture, by making one choice, you can make life better—for yourself and for others. You need only choose to do it. Join the circle of civility, believe in the power of one, and choose civility today.



## **LEW BAYER**

**Civility Experts Worldwide**

*Character, courage, commitment . . .  
these are the immeasurable benefits  
of harnessing the power of civility*

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Since 1997, Lew Bayer has been internationally recognized as Canada's leading expert on Civility at Work™ with a focus on social intelligence and culturally-competent communication. She is founder of The Center for Cultural Competence, CEO of multinational civility training group Civility Experts Worldwide and President of the International Civility Trainers' Consortium.

With the release of *The Power of Civility*, Lew is an eight-time published author. She is a proud mentor for *The Etiquette House*, a member of the Advisory Board for *A Civil Tongue*, a national columnist, and a frequent expert commentary contributor to over sixty online, print, and television publications. Lew is a faculty member at Georgetown University Center for Cultural Competence, has trained for the American Management Center in New York and is a long-term facilitator at the Canadian Management Center in Toronto, Canada. Lew is a Master trainer for the Canadian School of Service, and a certified Culture Coach® who also holds credentials in inter-cultural communications and occupational language assessment.

In 2009, Lew was chosen as the Manitoba Woman Entrepreneur in International Business and she was the first Canadian to receive the prestigious AICI International Civility Star Award in 2010.

*"I hope that many readers—and especially young ones—will be inspired by this timely book to make civility a cornerstone of their buildings of beliefs."*  
—Dr. P.M. Forni, co-founder of the Johns Hopkins University Civility Project  
and author of *Choosing Civility*

*The Power of Civility is packed with thought-provoking perspectives on what civility really means, as well as practical solutions for incorporating civility best practices into your work and life. In this comprehensive book, eighteen top civility and etiquette professionals go beyond the typical "please and thank you" conversations about civility and challenge you to think about your personal standards, accountability and values, and what it means to be committed to choosing civility, whether at home, at work, in your community, or in public—at home and abroad. This book provides the tools you need to boost your social intelligence and build your cultural competence, giving you the confidence and poise to go anywhere and be welcomed as a caring and considerate citizen of the world. Discover the power of civility!*

## See What's Inside

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