

CIVILITY

Presented by the Counseling Center

DEFINING CIVILITY

Noun: formal politeness and courtesy in behavior or speech

“I hope we can treat each other with **civility** and respect.”

Synonyms: courtesy, politeness, respect

Antonyms: disrespect, rudeness

(from Google Dictionary)

However, civility is much more complex.

It is related to a lot of issues, and people define civility in **many different ways**.

MOST PEOPLE AGREE THAT CIVILITY IS:

- A complex concept
- A positive thing
- In the realm of ethics
- Related to courtesy (bestowing respect and attention on others)
- Related to politeness (polished behavior; sharing our best selves with others)
- Related to manners (handling interactions between ourselves and others with care)

WHY IS CIVILITY IMPORTANT?

Civility impacts how we are with ourselves, and how we engage with others.

The way we treat others each and every day is an important measure of our achievements.

- Do we make others' lives easier or harder?
- Do we add to the joy of another's existence, or do we simply add another layer to their misery?

The ability to build a respectful relationships (even with those whom we might not like) is an important skill for future success in any career.

LIVING WELL WITH OTHERS



Humans are not solitary beings.
We exist within the context of relationships.

Good relationships add to the richness and joy of our lives.
Bad relationships lead to the disintegration of the quality of our lives.



To learn to be happy, we need to learn to live well with others.

EMPATHY

Empathy is **key** to civility.

Empathy is being able to imagine others' hurt and to relate it to the hurt we'd experience if we were in their place.

Empathy is different than sympathy. Sympathy would include feeling sorry for someone, whereas empathy asks you to **put yourself in the other person's shoes** to experience what they might be going through.



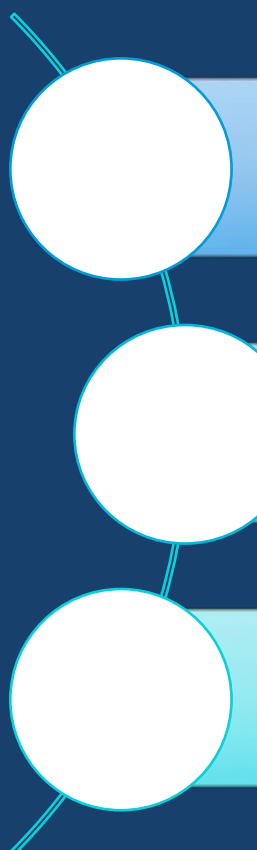
CIVILITY AND EMPATHY



Empathy is an ability to identify with others and feel what they feel. Civility and empathy are interwoven. Civility is the behavioral manifestation of empathy. No action is without consequences for others. Nothing that we do is without a single consequence for somebody, somewhere, whether or not we're immediately aware of it. Therefore, the anticipation of what those consequences will be is a key to civility. We have the choice to act with civility. By choosing civility, we are choosing to do the right thing for others. We choose to do the greater good.

WE ARE IN CONTROL

WE ARE IN CONTROL OF OUR HAPPINESS

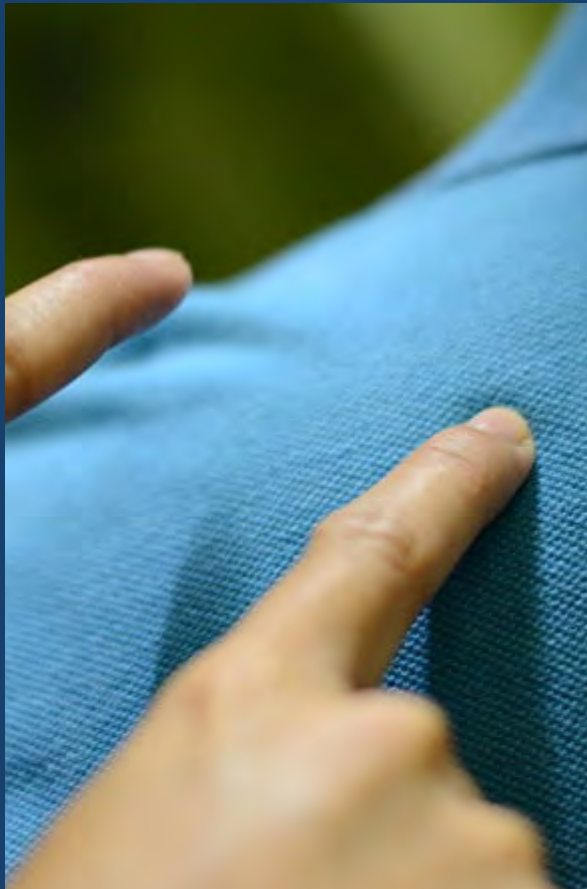


Happiness doesn't come from events in our lives, but rather **how we choose to respond** to those events.

Our lives are full of things we cannot control. What we **CAN** control is how we react to them.

We have control over our thoughts, which ultimately results in us having control over our feelings.

CHANGING OUR THOUGHTS



- Imagine standing on a crowded bus and being poked in the back by a sharp object. How do you think you might feel? Angry? Fearful?
- Now imagine you turn around and discover that the person poking you is blind and is accidentally poking you with his/her cane. What happens to your feelings of anger or fear?
- Your feelings probably change almost instantly to another feeling such as pity or guilt. This happens because you now have different thoughts about the situation, even though the situation has not changed.
- You cannot control the situation, being poked in the back on a crowded bus, but you can control the thoughts you have about the situation.

RELATIONSHIPS



Civility is preventative medicine for relationship dysfunction in the way exercise is preventative medicine for heart disease.

We can keep hurt in relationships to a minimum by teaching ourselves to be good at being with others.

When we are good to others, we decrease (not eliminate) the likelihood that others will be disrespectful or harmful to us.

If and when others are disrespectful and harmful to us, civility dictates a response that preserves our **dignity and integrity**, in preventing us from treating others harmfully.

CIVILITY AND SELF-EXPRESSION



Freedom of speech is a cherished right in the United States. However, freedom of speech does not allow a person to say anything and everything that comes to mind, regardless of context.

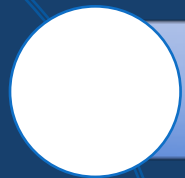
- Freedom of speech is guided by parameters of **time, setting and context**. One cannot yell, "FIRE" in a crowded movie theater and expect to be protected from prosecution by claiming freedom of speech. Similarly, one cannot make threatening ("I'm going to kill you") or false statements about someone and claim freedom of speech as a defense.
- Freedom of speech requires that a person engages some **judgment** about choosing **WHEN** and **HOW** to express oneself. Not every thought or feeling is worth expressing. This is a novel concept, especially in the era of Twitter, Facebook and Instagram.

Restraint is an internal designated driver. Restraint is the internal voice that asks, "Do I really want to do this? Do I really NEED to do this? Is anybody going to be hurt by this?" Restraint is the art of infusing **thoughtfulness** into everything we do. It's the skill of limiting immediate self-gratification for feeling good later.

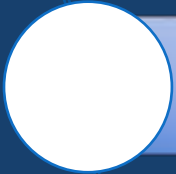
- When reacting to others, we must exercise restraint and consider is this the correct time, setting and context to express myself? Do I really want to do this? Do I need to do this? Is anybody going to be hurt?

THE RULES

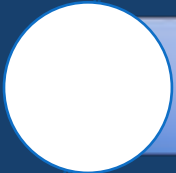
FORNI'S (2002) RULES FOR CIVILITY



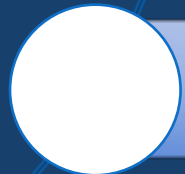
Forni developed 25 guiding principles or “rules of the road” for civility.



Forni's rules for civility may be useful in creating the community we seek.



Some of these rules may appear to be common sense; others may sound ludicrous.



Some of these rules may be ingrained, and you follow them without even thinking about it; others may require a conscious, deliberate effort on your part.

RULE #1: PAY ATTENTION

Often, we go through life on autopilot. We stop paying attention to the environment around us, and we stop noticing who is in front of us.

Pay attention to others:

By paying attention to others, you convey that they are worthy of your attention, and you honor their worth.

Pay attention to yourself:

Be aware of how/when/why you react positively or negatively to others, and honor that.

RULE #2: ACKNOWLEDGE OTHERS

Pay attention and acknowledge others' existence, feelings, and behaviors—what others do for you, and what others mean to you.

Remembering someone's name or paying a sincere compliment are simple ways of acknowledging others.

Acknowledging others by saying "hello" is a basic acknowledgement of their humanity.

- Waiting to say hello until somebody says hello to you first is a game. There's no loss of face in acknowledging another's existence.

RULE #3: THINK THE BEST

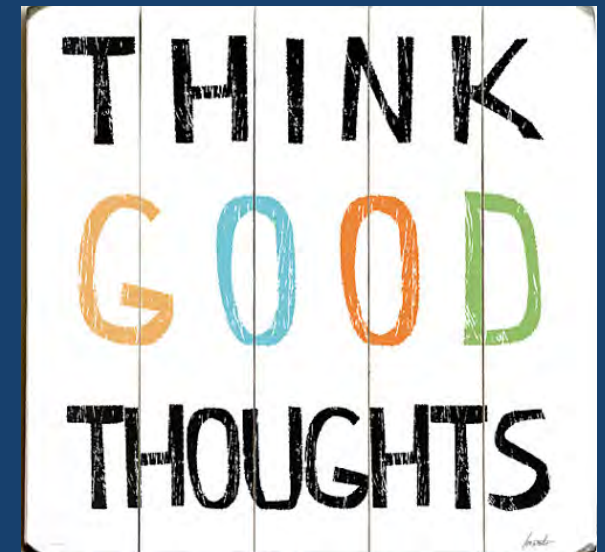
Expecting the best in others or in a situation fosters civility.

Expecting the best in humanity allows others to act at their best.

Not everybody is good, but think of ways you can act in a way that will allow others to be good to you.

Temper optimism with realism: maintain great expectations, but don't discount the possibility of unpleasant surprises.

When unpleasant interactions arise, evaluating the person within the context of situation may allow you to give the person the benefit of the doubt.



RULE #4: LISTEN

Listening carefully to someone not only conveys that you value the message, but that you value the messenger as well.

What prevents us from listening well to others?

- **Preoccupation with ourselves:** We're overly focused on our own needs. When we interrupt others, we demonstrate that we can't share the spotlight.
- **Self absorption:** We THINK we know what someone else thinks, so we stop listening—or finish their sentences for them.
- **Redirection of attention:** We disregard what someone says and proceed with our own thought, totally disconnected from what the other person was saying.
- **Listening with the future in mind:** If we're preoccupied with the outcome of the exchange, we don't pay attention to the here-and-now of the content.

Paying attention to what someone says takes concentration and effort

- **Eliminate distractions:** It is difficult to pay attention if your cell phone is on or if other distractions are present. The myth of multitasking is that humans can meaningfully attend to several things at once. We can't. We may try to do so, or we may appear to do so, but we do not. To listen MEANINGFULLY to someone means to listen without any other agenda or task that distracts us.
- **Show you're listening through nonverbal behavior:** Maintaining eye contact and nod your head. Good listening is NOT the same as giving good advice; don't give advice unless you're asked for it.

RULE #5: BE INCLUSIVE

We have strong need to be included and accepted by others.

Part of our identity is via groups—family, friends, team, gangs, etc.

To deliberately exclude someone without a legitimate reason from a group is rude and hurtful.

Boundaries are useful if they serve a purpose, such as when we set a boundary with someone who asks too much of us. However, self-serving, rude, discriminatory boundaries are disrespectful.

Clique mentality is counterproductive in long run to most organizations.

RULE #6: SPEAK KINDLY

Make sure you NEED to speak. Are you making a genuine contribution to the conversation, or are you just filling dead air?

Speak slowly so others can hear what you're saying.

Pay attention to your volume. People respond to volume and tone as much as they respond to content. Unless someone's hair is on fire, there's no need to yell. You can be angry and express that clearly without yelling.

In coping with conflict, **avoid derogatory comments** about age, ethnicity, sexuality, etc. It doesn't serve your purpose, unless your purpose is simply to be hurtful. If this is your purpose, then you need to examine why your goal is to hurt someone.

Focus on issues at hand, not laundry list of every single thing that's wrong.



RULE #7: DON'T SPEAK ILL OR GOSSIP



Why we trash others:

- We may be unsure of our own worth, so we project onto others our own insecurities
- Trashing others makes us feel superior to those we put down
- It can be an act of revenge
- Verbally assaulting others can be a power play—it disempowers the person we're trashing, especially if they're not there; also builds an implicit alliance of "us" against "him/her"

Internet and verbal attacks: anonymity of internet allows for verbal "hit and run". People use the internet to say things they would never consider saying to someone directly because there's little chance of direct face-to-face confrontation. This is ineffective and cowardly.

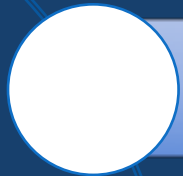
Drawbacks:

- We often have no idea how internet-driven attacks impact the target. The recent tragedies involving middle school, high school and college students targeted on Facebook prove the damage that this kind of behavior can inflict.
- Attacks may be interpreted by others as permission for others to verbally attack that same target.
- Internet attacks are cowardly and disrespectful.
- They are often unproductive, because they don't fix or improve the relationship.
- There is a risk of retaliation and increasing the climate of hostility.

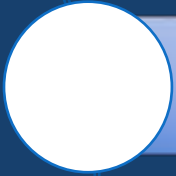
What to do if you're in the presence of trash talk:

- Leave.
- Remain silent.
- Say something positive or change the subject.
- Confront the attacker: "I'm not comfortable discussing this," or, "It doesn't seem fair to talk about X when he/she's not here."

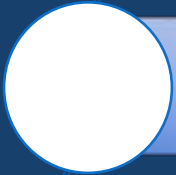
RULE #8: ACCEPT AND GIVE PRAISE



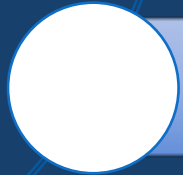
As children, we learn that praise is a manifestation of love from our parents or caretakers, and proof that we're worth something.



Why don't we offer praise freely? We may think that if we praise others, that we are somehow diminished or weakened. We may believe it "costs" us something of ourselves to praise others.



Praising others works to our advantage. By praising others, we increase the likelihood that others will act as their best selves, which makes our lives easier and better.



Tricks for giving praise:

- Only offer a compliment if it's sincere.
- Don't assume the person knows what you're feeling.
- Be specific. "Good job" is fine, but "I especially liked your third paragraph when you compared and contrasted X and Y" is better.

RULE #9: RESPECT EVEN A SUBTLE “NO”

Respecting “no” is a basic rule of respect.

When someone declines a request by saying no, don’t interrogate them.


Respect nonverbal behavior. If someone is sitting next to you on a plane focusing more on their laptop than you, this is a nonverbal “no”.

Some people find it hard to accept “no” out of a sense of entitlement (“I want things my way all the time”).


Some people have a hard time hearing “no” since they equate a rejection of a request with a rejection of them as a person. This is a self-esteem issue that needs to be worked through.




RULE #10: RESPECT OTHERS' OPINIONS




Respecting others' opinions requires sensitivity, tolerance and an open mind.



Disrespect for others' opinions comes in many forms. Telling someone, "You're an idiot!" when they disagree with you is obviously disrespectful. Assuming everyone should think like you think is a more subtle example.



It's important to recognize that others are entitled to look at the world differently, and when they share their views with us, they expect a fair hearing



It's possible to disagree with an opinion respectfully, "I see what you're saying and I see it a different way" or "yes, what you're saying may be true in general, but there may be times when it's not..."

RULE #11: MIND YOUR BODY

The way you present your body in public can be offensive to others.

Basic grooming:

- Be clean.
- Try not to be overly perfumed or overly smelly.
- Wear clean clothes.
- Make an effort to have fresh breath.

If you think or question whether your shirt is too low cut or your pants are too tight for a meeting, they probably are.


Avoid doing basic grooming in public:

- Apply makeup in bathroom, not on a bus or in class.
- Don't pick your teeth in public.


Other manners:

- Keep your fingers out of your mouth, nose and ears in public.
- Close your mouth while you chew.
- Don't spit.
- Excuse yourself to blow your nose. Then, wash your hands afterwards.


RULE #12: BE AGREEABLE



Flexibility is key. Make some effort to compromise/comply with others, unless you have a COMPELLING reason not to. Know what you are willing to compromise and which “battles” you are willing to lose.



Recognizing and admitting when you are wrong or don't know the answer is an important skill in agreeableness and civility. Work on developing this skill.



Learn to listen for points of similarity between you and others, not just points of difference.

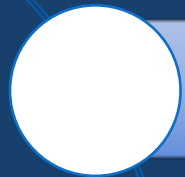


Accept others' offers of kindness.

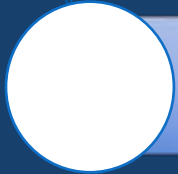
RULE #13: KEEP IT DOWN AND REDISCOVER SILENCE

- Sharing space with others (classmates, friends, schoolmates) requires sensitivity when you are watching TV, listening to music, using computer, etc.
 - Turn off your cell phone when you're having a face-to-face conversation with someone.
 - Turn off all electronics in class.
 - If your roommate is trying to sleep, turn down your TV or music.

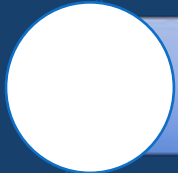
RULE #14: RESPECT OTHER PEOPLE'S TIME



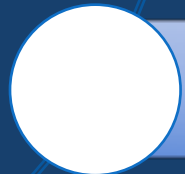
Value others' time as much as you value your own.



Call to cancel if you can't make an appointment.



Be on time to scheduled events or class. Notify someone if you're going to be more than 5 minutes late.



Schedule your day appropriately. It is rude to schedule appointments that you have no ability to keep or will be late for.

RULE #15: RESPECT OTHER PEOPLE'S SPACE

Mind personal space, and how it varies based on the person, culture, gender, etc.

Be mindful about touching people in conversation, especially in a business setting.

Extensions of personal space are sometimes known as territory. Respecting someone's territory includes respecting their dorm room or their desk at work. Be mindful of walking into someone's room or work space without asking permission first.

Don't ever use a handicapped parking space if you're not handicapped

You're responsible for your friends' behavior if they are in your space. If your friends invade your roommate's space, it's your responsibility to correct them. Don't let your friends sit on your roommate's bed, eat his/her food or borrow his/her things without your roommate's permission. If your roommate is not there, assume the answer is NO.

Don't read other people's e-mails, letters or texts. Don't scan someone else's phone. Don't touch other people's personal items on their desks.

Leave everything as you found it.

RULE #16: APOLOGIZE EARNESTLY



- When we apologize, we acknowledge that we did something wrong and work at repairing the damage.
- Apologizing is difficult because it calls for us to get over our pride and admit we were in error. Apologizing puts us in a position of weakness.
- Apologies should be sincere and heartfelt, and they should acknowledge **WHAT** we did wrong, and that we understand the **EFFECTS** of our behavior, and that we are not looking for **EXCUSES**.
- Don't assume that your apology will **ALWAYS** and **IMMEDIATELY** be accepted. The person you hurt may need time to absorb and process your apology, and may need time to recover from any hurt or wrongdoing. He/she may never accept your apology. If that is the case, then the best you can do is keep focused on mending your ways.

RULE #17: ASSERT YOURSELF



- Asserting oneself involves establishing clear, firm personal boundaries.
- Setting limits has to do with making CHOICES about what is appropriate and not appropriate. We choose to set limits because we're entitled to exercise control over our bodies, our time and our energy. It's our choice how we use our bodies, our time and our energy. By saying no to someone else and yes to ourselves, we aren't taking something that belongs to others, we're keeping something that is rightfully ours.
- We often fail to be assertive because of a concern that we may jeopardize a relationship, not realizing the harm we do to relationships if we FAIL to set boundaries around unacceptable behavior.
- Assertive statements require 3 things:
 1. A description of the behavior that's unacceptable.
 2. Your emotional reaction to the behavior (angry, hurt...)
 3. A description of the effect of the behavior
- Ex: I feel really angry (emotional reaction) when you talk over me (unacceptable behavior) because it makes me feel insignificant and unimportant (effect of the behavior).

RULE #17: ASSERT YOURSELF

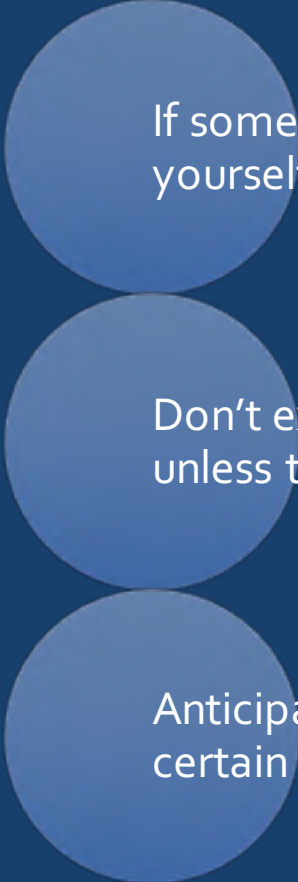


- Don't be surprised if some people respond defensively when you assert yourself. Don't get into counter-accusations and blaming. Restate your concern, and if they're ready/willing to listen, then you can continue the conversation. If not, it may be best to end the conversation and continue it another time when everyone is calmer.
- It's appropriate to keep your "no" statements simple and short. It's perfectly acceptable to say, "No, thank you," "No, I'm not comfortable with that," or "No, that's not what I had in mind" without having to elaborate further. Regardless of others' reactions to your "no", in most everyday interactions, you don't owe anybody an explanation.
- Dismissive suggestions like, "Chill out" can sometimes be a way of the other person dismissing your concerns or feelings. You can choose to counter that by confronting them on the dismissal: "When you tell me to chill out, you sound like you're telling me not to feel what I feel. I feel very strongly about this, and I hope you can respect my feelings and the reason I feel as strongly as I do."

RULE #18: AVOID PERSONAL QUESTIONS

- Except in close relationships, topics such as religion, personal finances, personal relationships and politics can be considered too personal. Such questions often cause others to feel embarrassed, uncomfortable or anxious.
- Questions that you may ask friends may be too personal for acquaintances or coworkers.
- If you feel like your privacy has been invaded by overly personal questions, you can respond as follows:
 - “I don’t feel comfortable talking about that.”
 - “I prefer not to discuss personal/financial/religious matters.”
 - “I’m sorry, but I don’t see why you need to know that.”
 - “I’m not sure why that’s important.”
 - “Thank you for your concern.”

RULE #19: CARE FOR YOUR GUESTS



If someone is a guest in your home (or dorm), make an effort to commit yourself to his/her well-being.

Don't expect guests to help with chores (do dishes, make dinner, clean up) unless they're staying for an extended amount of time.

Anticipate special needs of guests (allergies; religious prohibitions against certain foods or alcohol...)

RULE #20: BE A CONSIDERATE GUEST

Don't go somewhere where you are not invited.

Arrive on time and leave on time to respect the event (Do not arrive late or leave early).

Don't bring other guests that were not explicitly invited, such as partners, children or pets.

Assume the place is smoke-free, unless it's EXPLICITLY stated otherwise.

Don't show up empty-handed. Bring flowers, food, etc.

Call the next day to say thank you, or send a thank-you note.

Respect others' property: Don't put your feet on somebody else's couch. Don't rearrange somebody else's furniture

RULE #21: THINK TWICE BEFORE ASKING FOR FAVORS



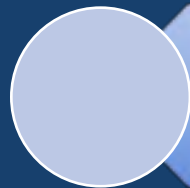
Consider solving your own problem before you ask for help.



Don't ask for a "favor" if it means you're asking someone to do something unethical, immoral, dishonest or illegal.

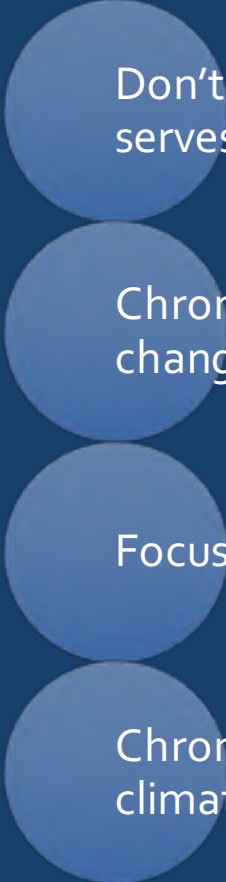


Don't assume your friends will always do favors for you.



Although reciprocity is nice, do not assume that just because you have done something for someone else that they now "owe" you a favor.

RULE #22: HOLD OFF ON IDLE COMPLAINING



Don't get stuck in recurrent, chronic complaining that serves to spread misery.

Chronic complaining is not the same as advocating for change or asserting oneself productively.

Focus on finding solutions rather than placing blame.

Chronic pessimism and avoidance of help fosters a negative climate for all involved.

RULE #23: ACCEPT AND GIVE CONSTRUCTIVE CRITICISM

Before you provide criticism, make sure your intention is to help and not to humiliate, manipulate or extract revenge.

To make criticism constructive:

- Focus on the issue or behavior, not the person.
- Describe what you observed, rather than making accusations or name calling.
- Suggest a solution.
- Remain kind, calm and empathic; end on a positive note.

In receiving criticism, remember that criticism is a chance to learn something. Try to remain open-minded and listen

Is this piece of criticism valid?

- If so, agree with it, "I think that's valid" or "I see your point."
- If you're not sure, postpone your response, "I need to think about that."
- If you don't agree, don't argue. Simply state, "I can't agree with that," or, "I know that's not what I meant."

RULE #24: RESPECT THE ENVIRONMENT AND BE GENTLE WITH ANIMALS



Trashing the environment is disrespectful to others who share the same planet

- At the very least:
 - Don't litter.
 - Don't use products that harm the environment.
 - Recycle.
 - Conserve water, electricity and gas.
 - Don't neglect animals.

RULE #25: DON'T SHIFT RESPONSIBILITY AND BLAME



- Take responsibility for mistakes directly.
- Don't shift responsibility onto others for your actions, or inactions.
- It's never justified to be rude in response to a rude person. You lose sight of your own integrity and your own rules of engagement by behaving in a way that's less than your best self.

SELF-REFLECTIVE EXERCISE

SELF-REFLECTIVE EXERCISE QUESTIONS

1. Which three of Forni's (2002) rules do you most often OBSERVE? Why? How do you show that you observe these? In other words, what do you do that demonstrates that you follow these rules?
2. Which three of Forni's (2002) rules do you most often VIOLATE? Why?
3. Which of Forni's (2002) 25 rules contribute most to civility, in your opinion?
4. Choose 6 new rules (not the ones you listed from question #1). How can you demonstrate these 6 new rules in your day to day behavior? How will this impact your friends and family? How will those in your academic or professional life be impacted? In other words, if you choose to follow these 6 new rules, how will your professors or bosses react to your new behavior? How might they change their behavior towards you?