



THE LOGIC OF NURSING CIVILITY

GOALS

1. Contrast the difference between civility and incivility.
2. Manage the work environment to present the importance of civility.
3. Recognize the academic and the American Psychological Association's (APA) encouragement in requiring civility in the work environment.
4. Recognize the significant impact of civility as it relates to maintaining and improving patient/resident health care.

KEYWORDS FOR APPLICATION

1. Civility
2. Incivility
3. Civility Ambassador
4. American Psychological Association (APA)
5. Smart Phone
6. Logical
7. Coronavirus

Civility—such a simple word with many meanings! Many meanings include being kind, considerate, courteous, and polite. So many terms of gentleness mark the behavior path to expectations in nursing! Gentleness is a life skill that shows respect for others and is an expected part of everyday behavior in all facets of our community lives. Civility lifts people's spirits and encourages inspiration.

They say nurses are "logical"—nurses are trained to meet and follow strict principles of validity, reliability, and reason. We know that nursing is a science of formal reasoning and good judgment—not merely depending on feelings or opinions. With all this expected logic as an outcome of scientific rationale, nurses are expected to have the wisdom of some of our society's most intelligent members. Therefore, smart and logical nurses behave *civilly*. Consequently, it is difficult to forgive the blatant nursing incivility! A nurse's *Uncivil behavior* has been (and continues to be) evident when there is a resistance to reason and compromise—so unlike the true spirit of nursing!

You will never regret being kind in all human aspects and all forms of life. Civility allows us to disagree with others without disrespecting others.

Interesting!—there are many words, examples, and ways to show civility; however, we know this without obvious assertion:

No one has to state whether a person is civil or not civil--you know civility when you see it (or don't see it!) When civility exists, it flourishes with its obvious acceptable covert behaviors, gentle and accepting voice inflections, calming words, inspirational insights, listening stance, and lack of demeaning inferences!

CIVILITY AMBASSADOR RECOMMENDATION—AMERICAN PSYCHOLOGICAL ASSOCIATION (APA)

The APA takes a strong stand that encourages and supports civility at all teaching and facility/organizational levels. APA encourages the assigning of a CIVILITY AMBASSADOR to every committee. This person is to be “The Point Person” for civility efforts and encouragement or curtailment of incivility. Use the following APA information to improve civility and what civility is not as a committee hand-out. Discuss at least yearly in the committee/group setting the following information. The purpose is to keep everyone mindful of civility’s importance and avoid misinterpretation about what is and what is not civility.

AMERICAN PSYCHOLOGICAL ASSOCIATION (APA) CIVILITY RECOMMENDED GUIDELINES (2017)

The positive aspect of civility—**what civility is:**

1. Think carefully before speaking
2. Differentiate and articulate facts from opinions
3. Focus on common good
4. Disagree with others respectfully
5. Be open to others without hostility
6. Respect diverse views and groups
7. Offer spirit of collegiality
8. Offer productive and corrective feedback to those who behave in demeaning, insulting, disrespectful, and discriminatory ways
9. Create a welcoming environment for all
10. Focus corrective feedback on one’s best and most desirable behavior

The negative aspect of civility—**what civility is not:**

1. Interrupting and talking over others who have the floor
2. Overgeneralizing and offering dispositional character criticisms and attributions
3. Using language that is perceived as being aggressive, sarcastic, or demeaning
4. Speaking too often or for too long
5. Engaging in disrespectful non-verbal behaviors (eye-rolling, loud sighs)
6. Offering false praise or disingenuous comment (“With all due respect, but....”)

There is a reward for civility and a cost for incivility! The shared known cognitive challenges are related to attention/inattention and positive/negative outcomes to the life-saving work. Civility is so appreciated and desired, there-in lies the reward for every nurse. Conversely, incivility decreases Information processing and problem-solving abilities. *The outcome of incivility in a health care facility is known and recorded to increase patient deaths in the health care environment.*

EXISTENCE OF INCIVILITY

Our nursing history is rooted in acts of civility. Yet, recent years have been a problem as nursing educational institutions deal with nursing student dishonesty, bullying, and incivility in the classroom and clinical settings. Unfortunately, incivility is also evident in many health care settings and acted out by experienced nurses as the perpetrators of such observed uncivil behaviors. Nursing students in the clinical areas observe this behavior.

Research outcomes reported by the Korean Academy Nursing Administration (and experienced by many others) indicate that incivility nursing behaviors are many—including rude or disruptive words directed to other nurses, coworkers, and visitors. Even social media has contributed to the accessibility to post inappropriate, uncivil messages and photos that are impossible to monitor. It affects workplace morale, increases work stress, produces workplace burnout, decreases workplace commitment, decreases patient safety, causes unintentional violence, and causes a decrease in necessary and appropriate communication.

The big question is: Why are we seeing and experiencing an increase in nurses and nursing students' incivility? It probably can easily be related to nurses' high stress, burnout, and long hours. As if all the past causes were not enough, the overload of Coronavirus 19 with its potential and actual lethal transmission adds to healthcare providers' stress.

Research has shown that approximately 70% of health care institutions and nursing programs do not have specific plans, course content, or policies to address work incivility or violence. From all indications, it is time to incorporate theoretical and application of nursing principles in every student nursing course the expected component of civility. It is also time to incorporate the necessity and expectation of civility in all health care facility/organization expected nursing behaviors. Our continued and supposed unique professional nursing abilities depend on it!

NURSING EDUCATION AND FACILITY/ORGANIZATION CIVILITY

The steps to teaching civility to nursing students and incorporating civil expectations and acts within any facility/organization (especially to health care providers) would seem unnecessary—*not true!* Consider these helpful suggestions to include in a leadership course content and facility/organization's orientation and in-service meetings. The goal is to increase awareness, encourage civil behaviors, and emphasize polite behaviors' expectations as a significant part of health care and as a requirement for every health care provider.

Educational expectations for civility instruction should include:

1. Teaching the definition and fundamentals of civility, incivility, and collaboration.
2. Teaching meaningful recognition of acts of civility and incivility.
3. Teaching and practice of effective and civil decision-making.
4. Teaching leadership and management de-escalation skills as it relates to incivility.
5. Teaching as to how to be a civil role model.
6. Providing counseling for stress management as it relates to incivility.

7. Developing and managing an effective and easy reporting system for potential and actual incivility situations.
8. Clearly declaring zero tolerance verbally and in writing (policy) as to the unacceptability or intolerance for incivility or violence.
9. Incorporating exemplary examples of civility (and lack thereof) into every educational course, clinical situation, facility/organization's orientation, and in-service offerings.
10. Teaching and supporting communication efforts related to reversing negative outcomes of incivility.
11. Appropriately assigning staff to vulnerable situations wherein civility problems occur.
12. Rewarding significant civility behaviors and efforts (verbally--written report—recognition--promotion, etc.)

RESPONDING TO POSITIVE BEHAVIOR

Corrective feedback is at times required. A civil feedback approach to support or correct uncivil behaviors should be expected and valued by all. Sometimes, it is how a leader/teacher says something—not necessarily the message's content! The expectation of civility in the classroom or workplace should be a significant part of every educational course and employee's job description.

Psychology encourages leaders and instructors to *respond favorably to positive behavior*—known as positive reinforcement for civil behavior. Any person likes to hear what they do right! Sometimes (if not most of the time) students and hired employees will magnify and *increase* their civil behaviors over uncivil behaviors *if their positive and civil behaviors are outwardly recognized*.

Positive reinforcement of behavior involves the leader performing or providing a recognizable reward to a person doing a specific behavior. This recognized reward makes it more likely that the person doing the behavior will do the behavior again in the future.

Do you remember the words of this song that encourages positive reinforcement?

*♪You've got to accentuate the positive
Eliminate the negative
Latch on to the affirmative
Don't mess with Mister-In-Between♪*

SUGGESTED READING:

www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/do-the-right-thing/201708/even-psychologists-need-help-civility-guidelines

AUTHOR: Carolyn Taylor, Ed.D. M.N. R.N.