The Final Tool Is Responsibility

With each of the previous eight tools the focus has been on a specific verbal behavior, skill, or attitude that will result in our discourse being civil.

By definition behavior is “the manner of conducting oneself” Tool 1 Paying Attention, Tool 4 Not Gossip, and Tool 8 Apologize fall in this category. To pay attention we need to force all other distractions out of our minds and concentrate on the person specking. In order to not gossip we need to not say anything about another person that would not have their full consent. To apologize we need to recognize that when we have harmed someone in some way, we need to verbally knowledge our wrong doing and make amends.

Skill’s definition is “the ability to use one’s knowledge effectively” or “technical expertise”. Tool 2 Listen and Tool 7 Give Constructive Criticism are more than behaviors as they require more learning and understanding to preform them. True listening requires us to get out of our head and remain fully with the speaker until completion, and constructive criticism requires us to uphold the person’s integrity. Both require practice.

The last is attitude which by definition is “the mental position with regard to a fact or state” or a feeling or emotion toward a fact or state”. Tool 3 Be Inclusive, Tool 5 Show Respect and Tool 6 Be Agreeable seem to fit here. Since in almost everything we do, believe, or feel there is more than one way to look at it. We can have our preference, but it is so important to see other views. This is further done by showing respect at all times to another person. We act in a way that maintains their dignity. Finally being agreeable means we remain positive, want to hear what they have to say, and look for shared beliefs and ideas.

The final tool is Take Responsibility which is really not a verbal tool. Here this tool asks us to commit fully to being civil at all times. Lip service is not enough. We cannot just say that civility is a good concept. Rather we must embrace civility, learn how to use the 8 verbal tools and use them in every conversation that we have. To be civil is now our life long responsibility.

When we make such a commitment, we usually have a rational, purpose, belief, ideal, or goal behind our decision. I’m an avid reader and often find author’s chose of words insightful and helpful to me in strengthening my beliefs and ideals. I will include those words in my own conversations and in my writing of civility. As I was pondering what I was going to write about for this tool of Take Responsibility, I began to read the book, “The President Is Missing” by Bill Clinton and James Patterson. All the words of the President are in the first person either what he was saying to his staff or his thoughts. Early in the book he explained why he had run for office. He wanted to ensure that our world was “safer, stronger, fairer, and kinder”. Those four words caused me to pause. Immediately for me my thoughts went to civility and really those were the goal of civility and the eight tools could do just that.

Safety- Each tool helps us to do whatever we can to not hurt another. Our example leads others to do the same. Each of us begins to feel safer allowing us to be more open in sharing our thoughts.

Strong- Now we can face the many issues that face our lives, country, and the world. We can find common ground and make good decisions. Now our whole world is stronger.

Fair-Now that we are seeing a full perspective on an idea, problem, or need, we can take into account the whole and not just ourselves. Fairness becomes a factor in decisions.

Kind- As we see ideas from a different vantage point, we will see similarities in our views, but also in each other. Our understanding leads to reaching others with care, consideration and kindness.

Please accept this responsibility. Together we will all feel safe, live in a strong world where fairness and kindness reign.

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