The Next Three Tools of Civility

I hope that as you reviewed the first three tools last month that you began to see a pattern. Each tool helps us to do different things. They are not only clearly strongly linked together, they also complement each other. Each one helps us to better be able to stay focused on maintaining in ourselves civil communication. You need to use all the tools at once.

4. Don’t Gossip- If we were to consider the intent of civility and the intent of gossip, we would find that they are odds. Civility’s goal is to have a positive communication with another person even when you do not agree on every issue. With gossip you want to tell another person some negative, uncomplimentary, unreliable, or dirt about someone that you both know. Your intent is to be hurtful to the person that you are talking about. More often than not you are not sure of all the facts and you do not care. You want to do harm to the person’s integrity. There is the flip side if Don’t Gossip. Often you are a listener. Remember from the listening tool that to listen is to accept what is being said is a belief of the person in good faith. This is not the case as the intent is harm. You can act in several ways to end this line of conversation- remain silent and show your lack of interest in the topic, say ,you are unable to talk at this time, provide a positive comment about the person being discussed, change the subject or say that you are uncomfortable and want this subject dropped.

5. Show Respect- It is easy to show someone else respect when they have done something well, have been given an honor, expressed opinions that you share. On the other hand it is not so easy when they have beaten you at something, gotten something that you had wanted, or are expressing strongly an opinion that is opposite your own. Your mind set is to get into a defensive mood and do Whatever to diffuse their words. Sadly there are lots of ways to do that. You can use putdowns and name calling- stupid, dumb, idiot, racial and religious slurs, ugly. You are attempting to distract from what is being said to try to make others discount what the person is saying as well as to also begin to think of that person in a disrespectful way. Laughing at what is being said works. You can start to ridicule some of the person’s beliefs. Some shout at the person thinking noise can render is words lost. Others may slap, hit or punch. Ultimately some have gone so far is to do physical harm. Rather are mind set needs to be inclusive of respect across the board. All living things, our earth, our galaxy, space need our respect. We will treat all words with dignity. What each of us says that we believe is an opinion and not a fact. As such we can each allow ourselves to consider what is said.

6. Be Agreeable- Using the first five tools you have been able to hear clearly and openly everything that has been said, you have acknowledged that you fully understand the words or you have asked the questions you needed, and you have behaved respectfully. Now it is your turn. You can direct your thinking to what your opinions have been on the subject. Your first step is to consider where you agree. We humans like to have others agree with us. We feel we are a part of a greater whole; and people we care about are in agreement. We can be more open when we see that base of agreement, our own inclusiveness is expanded and we are more prepared to talk civilly about the parts of what is said that we may not fully or not agree all. Your beginning response is to share the aspects of the opinion that you are on common ground, agreement. Probably there will be some back and forth discussions on these agreements. Then when this is settled you ask that you would like to share some other thoughts. Now it is the speaker’s turn to pay attention, listen, and be inclusive and respectful. Please remember that none of your language is defensive or disrespectful. It really is inclusive. You want to describe another idea or way of looking. There are no slams on what has been said.

I will address the last three tools next month.

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