Better Together: Five Fundamentals of Civility for Physicians

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Learning Objectives:

• List some definitions of civility that are relevant to the behaviour and well-being of workers in the healthcare environment;

• Identify a grouping of strategies that promote professional civility and which can be integrated into all levels of professional training and practice.

• Appreciate ways that civility can have a positive impact upon workplace culture and the culture of medicine.
Disclosure

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Dr. Kaufmann has no commercial interests or conflicts of interest to disclose
The Physician Health Program

Over 8000 health professionals have been served since 1995

“If you build it…they will come.”
PHP callers are...

- exhausted and burned out
- ANXIOUS
- depressed
- Disillusioned
- discouraged
- isolated
- financially stressed
- stressed by marital or family problems
- caught conflicts
- angry
- victims of harassment and violence
- considering suicide
- experiencing a serious mental illness
- abusing or dependent on alcohol or drugs
- stressed at work
- disrupting work conditions
What does incivility look like?
Everyday Incivility

- Skipped “Hello.”
- Talking over, talking down
- Eye rolling or other demeaning gestures
- Rude use of technology
- Gossip
- Calling someone out, blaming publicly or in meetings
- Social exclusion
- Profanity, offensive jokes
- Minor boundary intrusions – sounds, aromas
Impacts of incivility:
(Leiter, M; Analyzing and Theorizing the Dynamics of the Workplace Incivility Crisis)

• Worker stress, distress, burnout, illness
• Decreased productivity, absenteeism, presenteeism
• Propagation of unwanted behaviour
• Decline in workplace morale
• Increased worker turnover and cost to the organization
• Cultural “Code of Incivility”
• Patient safety?
What are some definitions of civility?
Civility: (Spath and Dahnke; Institute for Civility in Government)

“Civility is about more than just politeness, although politeness is a necessary first step. It is about disagreeing without disrespect, seeking common ground as a starting point for dialogue about differences, listening past one’s preconceptions, and teaching others to do the same. Civility is the hard work of staying present even with those with whom we have deep-rooted and fierce disagreements.”
“It is political in the sense that it is a necessary prerequisite for civic action. But it is political, too, in the sense that it is about negotiating interpersonal power such that everyone’s voice is heard, and nobody’s is ignored.”

“Civility is claiming and caring for one’s identity, needs and beliefs without degrading someone else’s in the process.”
Civility: (Davetian, B; Civility: A Cultural History)

“...the extent to which citizens of a given culture speak and act in ways that demonstrate a caring for the welfare of others as well as the welfare of the culture they share in common.”
The Competent Professional

Medical Knowledge

Clinical Skill

Civility

Competence

Adapted from Brian Hodges MD
So why civility?

• Positive inference
• Palatable, acceptable
• Desirable with respect to professional effectiveness and satisfaction
• Enables many physician health / collegial conversations
• Positive cultural shift
Choosing Civility

The Twenty-Five Rules of Considerate Conduct

P.M. Forni

Cofounder of the Johns Hopkins Civility Project
Five Fundamentals Of Civility

1. Respect Others and Yourself
   Treat everyone in the workplace, regardless of role, with respect — even those we barely know, disagree with, or dislike. Respect for others requires inclusivity while observing healthy boundaries. Self-respect is key.

2. Be Aware
   Civility is a deliberate endeavour, requiring conscious awareness of oneself and others. Mindfulness and reflective practice enhance awareness.

3. Communicate Effectively
   Civil communication is more about how we say it as much as what we say. Or do. Effective communication is critical at times of tension or when the stakes are high.

4. Take Good Care of Yourself
   It’s hard to be civil when personally stressed, distressed, or ill.

5. Be Responsible
   Understand and accept personal accountability. Avoid shifting blame for uncivil behavioural choices. Intervene when it’s the right thing to do.
#1: Respect Others and Yourself

“Respect is like air. As long as it’s present, nobody thinks about it. But if you take it away, it’s all that people can think about.”

Crucial Conversations
Respect

- For those we know and like
- For those we don’t know
- For those we don’t agree with
- For those who have hurt us?
- Self
- *Culture of medicine*
Bank of Social Capital
#2: Be Aware

“We don’t see things as they are, we see things as we are.”

Anais Nin
Awareness Gap
Enhancing self-awareness and reflection

• Keep a reflective journal
• Mentorship
• Group / team discussion
• Seek effective feedback
• Mindfulness
#3: Communicate Effectively

“The single biggest problem in communication is the illusion that it has taken place.”
George Bernard Shaw
"I'm sorry, dear. I wasn't listening. Could you repeat what you've said since we've been married?"
Two kinds of silence:

- Good: Listening
- Not so good: Withholding important feedback
Active Listening

- Plan listening
- Eye contact
- Receptive body language
- Take plenty of time
- Be curious
- Resist planning your own script
“Empathy Immersion”

1. Suspend old habits of judgement
2. See issues through the eyes of the other stakeholders
3. Learn to “Let go” and “Let come.”

From “I’m Right and You’re an Idiot,” James Hoggan
Civil Conversation Blockers

“You…”

“You always…”

“You never…”

“Don’t take this personally, but…”

“With all due respect…”

“What were you thinking??”
Constructive Conversation

- Positive, planned, safe
- Mutual motivation, goals
- DESC assertiveness

- Clarify, check
- Leave the other feeling OK
- Don’t forget praise!
Should we communicate civilly with everyone?
ABC for tense moments:

A for Aware

B for Breathe

C for Choose Civil Communication
#4: Take Good Care of Yourself
Human Function Curve

- **Good Stress**
  - Performance
  - Healthy Tension
  - Comfort Zone
  - Fatigue

- **Distress**
  - Exhaustion
  - Ill Health
  - Breakdown

**Arousal Stress**

Modified after Dr. Peter Nixon
What happens if we can’t put the load down?

Burnout!
The Basics

Strategies for coping with stress and building personal resilience for physicians

$OMA
Physician Health Program
#5 Be Responsible

“Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world. Indeed, it is the only thing that ever has.”

Margaret Mead
Culture of Medicine

Swimming with sharks...
Swimming with the sharks:

• Any unidentified colleague is a shark until proven otherwise.
• Be sure not to bleed: it attracts sharks.
• Get out of the water if another is bleeding.
• Counter aggression with more aggression.

Krizek TJ; Surgery...Is it an Impairing Profession?
“In and through community lies the salvation of the world.”

M. Scott Peck
“The Different Drum”

• Ask
• Listen
• Encourage
• Follow-up
Cultural “memes” to consider:

• Self-sacrifice is necessary for success.
• Superior knowledge and ability “forgives” incivility.
• I learned this way…you must do the same.
• This is the way we have always done things here
• Many others…
Fix “Broken Windows”
Sharone Bar-David: “Trust Your Canary”

• Create clear Codes of Conduct

• Embed civility values into leadership practices

• Resist bystander mode

• Address instances of incivility early and promptly

• Honour the culture(s) to which you belong
Culture of Civility

Civility is contagious!
PHP

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