



The Power of Civility

Top experts reveal the secrets of social capital

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Anita Shower • Cheryl Walker-Robertson**

The *Power* *of* Civility

**Top Experts Reveal
The Secrets of Social Capital**





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Dedication

We dedicate this book to you, the
empathetic and caring person who
recognizes the need for considerate conduct
in everything you do.

We salute you for embracing civility in your
personal and professional life—and we
celebrate your commitment to
being the best you can be!

The Co-Authors of *The Power of Civility*

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Without Caterina's "take action" spirit, her commitment to excellence and her highly-skilled professional publishing team, you would not be reading this book, of which we are all so proud. Our truly dedicated team worked diligently to put together the best possible book for you. We are truly grateful for everyone's stellar contribution.

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We also acknowledge each other for delivering outstanding information, guidance and advice. Through our work in this book and with our clients, we are truly committed to enhancing peoples' lives through the skills and practice of civility. We are truly grateful that we get to do work that we love and make a contribution to so many in the process. We do not take our good fortune lightly. We are clear in our mission—to make a genuine contribution to you, the reader. Thank you for granting us this extraordinary opportunity.

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Introduction

“Civility costs nothing and buys everything.”

—Lady Mary Worley Montagu, English aristocrat and writer

Congratulations! You have opened an incredible resource, packed with great ideas that will guide you to an improved way of being in the world. The need for civility in all aspects of our lives has been advocated in nearly every form of media. You can make a significant difference in your own life, and in the lives of everyone you interact with, when you adopt the principles we discuss in this book. You are about to discover *the power of civility*.

We know you want to be the absolute best you can be. Your success in your business and personal life will be determined by how you greet people, respond to invitations, react to difficult situations or treat those who disagree with you. In fact, your success is determined by the way you present yourself in *all* that you say and do!

As top experts in etiquette and civility, we have joined together to give you the most effective strategies we know to help you deal with almost any situation with civility. Some bits of advice are repeated in different chapters—that should tell you how important that advice is!

Each of us has seen how even small shifts toward greater civility can transform one’s self-confidence and uplift one’s spirit. When you demonstrate kindness, consideration, thoughtfulness, respect, self-

restraint and responsibility, people are drawn to you. When they mirror civility back to you, everyone enjoys a sense of goodwill and heightened self-worth.

All the civility professionals you will meet in this book want you to have the confidence and poise to go anywhere and be welcomed as a caring and considerate citizen of the world. We have shared our best tips and proven guidelines to help you fit in, and to help you put others at ease.

To get the most out of this book, we recommend that you read through it once, cover to cover. Then go back and follow the tips that apply to you, in the chapters most relevant to your current situation. Every improvement you make will make a difference in how you feel about yourself, how you relate to those around you and how others respond to you in your daily personal and professional life.

Mastering all the aspects of civility and considerate conduct can take some time. If you take action and continually apply the strategies, tips and tactics we share in these pages, you will reap many rewards. With our knowledge and your action, we are confident that, like our thousands of satisfied clients, you too will master *the power of civility*.

The Co-Authors of *The Power of Civility*

The *Power* of One

Choosing Civility

By Lew Bayer

Whether we are talking about a table-setting or a handshake, the rules and rituals of etiquette have long held value. As early as 2500 B.C. with the first known manners guide, *The Instructions of Ptahhotep*, people have understood the technical aspects of courtesy. Choosing to follow the rules for dining, for entertaining, and for interacting socially and in business has always been a necessary element of social polish. Manners make it easier to live and work together, and there may be no serious damage done if you are just being polite out of habit. For example, maybe you always send a thank you card, even if you do not like the gift you received, or you always accept invitations, even when you know you have no intention of actually attending an event. However, as in these examples, exhibiting manners just for the sake of being polite is not really all that civilized. Following prescribed social conventions out of some sense of obligation, or being courteous just because you are directed to do so by some person or circumstance, without some measure of understanding and good intentions, is not nearly the same as choosing and practicing civility.

“Rules cannot take the place of character.”

—Allan Greenspan, former chairman, U.S. Federal Reserve

The *Power* of One _____

Teaching and practicing rules for manners and modern-day etiquette is relatively easy. Teaching and practicing civility is significantly more difficult. Some experts argue that because civility is the outcome of choosing behaviors that are congruent with positive personal values, you can teach a person how to make decisions, or you can teach someone about consequences. However, you cannot, in fact, teach civility. This is a long-debated issue and part of the reason many training professionals focus on changing manners and behaviors rather than trying to change attitudes, values or beliefs.

Unfortunately, many parents, teachers, and sometimes society in general, expect forced compliance and confuse it with civility. For example, a child can be taught to say “Sorry” but never learn why it is important to apologize and never understand what he or she did wrong in the first place. The child simply learns that you can do whatever you want and if someone gets mad, just say “Sorry” to get yourself out of trouble. Similarly, just because people smile and shake hands politely does not mean they actually respect or appreciate each other. The amount of attention and intention required to do something “just because” is far less than the amount of attention and intention required to do something with conscience. This difference explains the seemingly subtle difference between being polite and being civil. When courtesies are regularly extended without sincerity, the result is mistrust. When trust is diminished, social capital is depleted. Social capital is the extent to which we are connected to one another and it is an important byproduct of civility.

Choosing the right action, weighing the potential impact of choices against one’s own values, and being accountable for the outcomes of those choices are what build character. It’s character that distinguishes mannerly actions from civility. Abraham Lincoln said, “Reputation is the shadow. Character is the tree.” To compare, civility is what compels you to do the right thing just because it is right to do what’s right. This

belief is an aspect of your true self, part of your character, whereas manners can easily and often be exhibited simply as a means of sending a positive impression or appearing to be good.

While manners exhibited for any reason usually have some positive impact, when you exercise the power of choice and determine to extend a courtesy or some small kindness because you believe it is the right thing to do, the power of intention takes over, and intention is a very powerful thing. When you consistently choose actions based on your values and purposefully behave in a way that benefits others, civility becomes a point of your character.

Defining Civility

There are a range of dictionary definitions for civility—most of these refer to the obvious connection between manners and courtesy. However, these simple definitions do not accurately capture the attitudinal and values component so important to the practical applications of civility. The following expanded definition of civility helps to capture those complexities.

Civility is:

- A **conscious awareness** of the impact of one's thoughts, actions, words and intentions on others; combined with
- A **continuous acknowledgement** of one's responsibility to ease the experience of others (for example, through restraint, kindness, non-judgment, respect, and courtesy); and
- A **consistent effort** to adopt and exhibit civil behavior as a non-negotiable point of one's character.

Etiquette guidelines, which incorporate manners, represent the rules or conventions that apply to a situation, a time, a culture or a country.

The *Power* of One _____

Civility represents the overriding values and character of an individual. When groups of individuals share the same core values, those values create the character or culture of a family, an organization, and even a nation. When you do not have clearly-defined values, it is difficult to establish personal standards, and so it is easier to choose popular actions based on convenience rather than choose civility based on conscience. The end result is incivility.

Causes of Incivility

The following are commonly understood to be factors that engender rudeness and disrespectful behavior:

- Chronic stress
- Growing fearfulness about the future
- Constant technological advances and changes
- Decreased moral intelligence resulting from mainstream media
- Shifts in values across and among generational groups
- Cross-cultural incompetence
- Low social intelligence
- Undefined values
- Discomfort adapting to change
- Ongoing situational factors such as environment and context
- Ineffective communication
- General lack of personal integrity
- Limited incentive to do the right thing

Karl Albrecht, a well-known futurist and expert in the field of social intelligence, describes persistent rude behaviors as toxic. Toxic and

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