Examples of Practicing Civility in Everyday Life

You can create civility in your everyday life through:

- Intentionally making small “I see you” gestures
- Sharing “heart” stories
- Listening to understand
- Remaining curious amidst unfamiliarity
- Simply being “present” for another person
- Offering the gift of emotional and physical presence and attention

Here are some examples of ways to create civility:

Practice Civility with Friends and Family by taking the time to listen and be present when you engage in conversation

- When seated next to an older relative who has different political beliefs at a holiday gathering, you could ...
  - Ask them to tell you a story about their first experience with politics.
  - Ask them to share when their beliefs first formed and who influenced them.
  - Reciprocate with your story and perspective.

- For a friend who just had their first baby, you could ...
  - Ask what kind of support they need from a friend.
  - Ask them how they are coping with the transition of their new addition.
  - Make the time and space to listen to how they’re doing.

- When a friend or relative says something you disagree with, you could...
  - Ask “Why is that important to you?”
  - Get more information by saying, “Can you say more about that?”
  - Stay rooted in the practice of listening, resisting the desire to debate.
• When your cousin brings a new girlfriend from a different background to Thanksgiving you could ...
  o Ask if her family has a holiday tradition that always makes her feel as though she belongs.
  o Be open to learning about and trying out different holiday traditions.
  o Offer stories about your own family traditions and memories and where they come from.

• If you are seated next to your Vietnam veteran grandfather for dinner on Veterans Day, you could ...
  o Thank him for his service and sacrifice.
  o Ask him if he is open to answering questions about his experience.
  o Proceed to say, “Tell me more…”

• Following a family meal, you could approach the person who prepared the meal and ...
  o Directly thank them for the time and care they put into the meal.
  o Ask a thoughtful question like, “Are there any family recipes that have been passed down through the generations?”
  o Offer them a chance to sit down and enjoy everyone’s company while you clean up.

Practice Civity in the Workplace by getting to know the people you work with and letting them get to know you.

• Before a meeting you could ...
  o Start the meeting 10 minutes early to provide time for a brief “check-in.” Ask attendees to share how they are doing, something important they have going on in their week, or the highlight of their day.
  o Center yourself with a few deep breaths, so you can feel settled to be present.
  o Give yourself a mental pep talk, encouraging yourself to share your perspective during the meeting - and to pay attention when others contribute.

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• **During a meeting you could ...**  
  o Make eye contact with other attendees as they speak so they know they have your attention.  
  o Put your phone away so that you can be more present.  
  o Consider offering the simple question, “Do you want problem-solving, or would you prefer I just listen?” The answer can suggest whether you should sit back and listen, or be a part of brainstorming solutions.

• **At a professional networking event you could ...**  
  o Ask someone the question, “Why do you do the work that you do?”  
  o Ask someone if they have ever experienced challenges in their work and if they’d be willing to share how they overcame them.  
  o Be willing to be vulnerable and introduce yourself to new people.

• **At a fundraising event you could...**  
  o Ask someone how they first got involved with the organization.  
  o Ask what part of the organization’s mission resonates most for them.  
  o Share your own responses for the first two questions with someone new.

• **Anytime, you could ...**  
  o Thank someone who showed courage, authenticity, or vulnerability during a meeting. Send a follow up note of appreciation for their willingness to share.  
  o Reach out to a colleague who is only an acquaintance for coffee or lunch to get to know them on a deeper level.  
  o Stay quiet when someone seems reluctant to share, to show your openness to listening.

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**Practice Civity in Your Community** by bringing a sense of “I see you!” to the people you encounter as you move through your day.

• **At a neighborhood association meeting you could ...**  
  o Thank another attendee for showing up, to acknowledge the importance of their presence.  
  o Ask attendees to share why they have chosen to live in this neighborhood.  
  o Plan to listen more than you speak.

[www.civity.org](http://www.civity.org)
• In the elevator you could …
  o Greet the person next to you to acknowledge that you “see” them.
  o Genuinely ask someone how their day is going.
  o Offer a compliment.

• After a religious service you could …
  o Consider signing up for a service position.
  o Approach someone and ask how they’re connected to this specific congregation.

• When you pass a stranger on the street you could …
  o Make eye contact with and smile, amidst the hustle and bustle.
  o Say “Good morning!” or “Hello!”

• At your barbershop/nail salon you could…
  o Ask the person if they want to talk, or if they would prefer the quiet.
  o Ask the person how their day is going.
  o Ask the person doing your hair/nails when they first discovered their passion.

• At a cultural event you could …
  o Make a goal to interact 1:1 with someone who you don’t know.
  o Consider asking questions like, “What are you finding most enjoyable here?”

• At your city council meeting you could …
  o Thank the mayor or council member for their willingness to listen.
  o Validate someone’s differing perspective by saying, “I hear you” or “I appreciate you sharing AND (instead of but) ....”
  o Affirm the effort that another attendee has made to be there.

The fact is, there are infinite possibilities for making civity happen!

• In an online gaming forum, you could …
  o Ask someone how the virtual reality experience adds to their life.

• At a coffee shop you could …
  o Ask the barista to share where their love of coffee came from.
• **At the grocery store you could ...**
  o Ask someone in line what they love about a specific product in their cart.
  o After unloading, offer to take someone’s cart back for them

• **At the dog park you could ...**
  o Ask another dog owner about their pet’s adoption/rescue story.

• **At the gym you could ...**
  o Ask a personal trainer to share the inspiration behind their health journey.

• **In a 12-step support meeting you could ...**
  o Ask someone to share their recovery story.
  o Ask what kind of support they need from someone as an ally.

• **At the airport you could ...**
  o Ask the person next to you where they’re headed or how they feel about their upcoming trip.

• **Almost anywhere you encounter other people ...**
  o You can interact with them in a way that lets them know that you see them as a person.