

Mind and Matter

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In Search of Civility in the Workplace

by Rosario Zavala, MSW, LCSW

Civility is the act of behaving in a manner that is respectful and shows regard for others. Civil individuals tend to employ decorum, manners, and politeness in their interactions. These individuals are able to maintain poise and self-control, maintaining a façade of civility, even as adverse feelings may be brewing underneath the surface. Self-control and self-restraint are behaviors that can be learned but do take practice. Interestingly enough, civility often increases as one ages but does not necessarily increase as a result of education level or environment.

Civil behavior does not mean pretending to be nice, then stabbing someone in the back. It does not mean that one rolls over and “plays dead”. And it is not giving up one’s rights to file complaints or seek assistance when dealing with difficult co-workers. Furthermore, it is not avoiding disagreement when it is necessary. Civility is moving beyond politeness to get to more authentic, respectful interaction to allow individuals to openly communicate concerns and feel confident that these concerns will be worked through.

But what causes incivility? Christine Porath’s chapter in *The Oxford Handbook of Positive Organizational Scholarship* offers these ideas: narcissism, aggressiveness, high levels of stress, low emotional intelligence, and social inhibitions. She adds individuals often do not deliberately set out to act uncivilly. There are different cultural norms and what is uncivil in one culture or workplace may not be viewed as uncivil in other cultures. Porath further indicates that an individual’s personality may also play a role as individuals have different thresholds for tolerating uncivil behavior.

Modeling civil behavior in the workplace:

- Remember to use pleasantries. Greet each other every day.
- Listen and make eye contact when spoken to.
- Avoid interrupting or raise objections until the individual is finished speaking.
- Express appreciation and gratitude in public. Address conflict in private, when possible.
- Have an attitude of warmth and acceptance towards others.
- Avoid accusations. Ask questions instead.
- Be respectful, even in disagreement.
- Avoid gossip and tagging others with unflattering nicknames.

Maintaining a healthy and productive organization with strong team relationships requires everyone’s effort and responsibility. Each day you may want to ask yourself, how can I be an active participant in promoting a respectful and civil workplace?

The FSAP offers free and confidential consultations. Please call us at 305-284-6604 to schedule an appointment with a licensed mental health professional.

Porath, C. L. (2011). Civility. In K. Cameron & G. Spreitzer (Eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of Positive Organizational Scholarship*

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Gratitude Corner

Cultivating an “attitude of gratitude” has been linked to better health, sounder sleep, less anxiety and depression, higher long-term satisfaction with life and kinder behavior toward others. People who practice gratitude consistently report a host of benefits:

Physical

- Stronger immune systems
- Less bothered by aches and pains
- Lower blood pressure
- Exercise more and take better care of their health
- Sleep longer and feel more refreshed upon waking

Psychological

- Higher levels of positive emotions
- More alert, alive, and awake
- More joy and pleasure
- More optimism and happiness

Social

- More helpful, generous, and compassionate
- More forgiving
- More outgoing
- Feel less lonely and isolated.

Stay tuned to the next newsletter when simple gratitude practices will be discussed.

Sources: “Why gratitude is good” by Robert Emmons



Inspirational Quote

“The larger the island of knowledge, the longer the shoreline of wonder.”
- Ralph W. Sockman

A Healthy Recipe for the Fall Season



Classic Butternut Squash Soup

INGREDIENTS

- 2 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil
- 1 carrot, diced
- 1 celery stalk, diced
- 1 onion, diced
- 4 cups cubed butternut squash, fresh or frozen
- 1/2 teaspoon chopped fresh thyme
- 4 cups low-sodium chicken broth
- 1/2 teaspoon fine sea salt
- 1/2 teaspoon ground black pepper

METHOD

Heat oil in a large soup pot. Add carrot, celery and onion. Cook until vegetables have begun to soften and onion turns translucent, 3 to 4 minutes. Stir in butternut squash, thyme, chicken broth, salt and pepper. Bring to a boil, reduce heat and simmer until squash is fork-tender, about 30 minutes. Use an immersion blender to purée soup. Alternatively, let the soup cool slightly and carefully purée in batches in an upright blender.

www.wholefoodsmarket.com/recipes

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Mind and Matter is a quarterly publication from the UM Faculty and Staff Assistance Program that provides helpful tips and articles regarding work-life balance, health and well-being. If you would like to receive this newsletter directly in your inbox each quarter, as well as receive announcements of upcoming FSAP seminars, please send an email to cbootle@miami.edu.

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