



SOCIETY OF ACTUARIES

Article from:

The Stepping Stone

January 2010 – Issue 37

How Polite Are You?

by Maureen Wild



Maureen Wild is a certified etiquette and ethics trainer. She can be reached at Maureen@highroadsolutions.com or 908.625.8563

Can you answer the next few questions? Let's see...

1. What is the number one most irritating habit you can demonstrate?
2. The absence of which simple phrases can kick off an "incivility spiral?"
3. What is a surefire way of ticking off workmates when sharing a communal kitchen or dining lounge?
4. What vice can torpedo your admission to the career fast track?
5. What common act of oafishness labels you a loser?
6. The failure to extend this courtesy will turn off your colleagues faster than a speeding bullet. What is it?

Do you feel fairly secure with your answers? Check below to see if you are courteous or uncouth.

1. What is the number one most irritating habit you can demonstrate?

Interrupting others.

People who habitually interrupt others win the award for social ineptitude and downright boorishness. When you constantly interrupt, you are subliminally suggesting that what you think is more important than what anyone else thinks, (or says), and that your time is far too valuable to stop and really listen to someone else's point of view. If you tend to cut people off mid-sentence, cut it out. It's fearfully impolite. Whether on the phone, in a meeting or in ordinary conversation—no one person should dominate the chatter.

2. The absence of which simple phrases can kick off an "incivility spiral?"

The absence of little pleasantries such as "Good Morning," "Thank you," "Excuse me," "Please," and "May I..." can cause real headaches down the road.

Epidemiologists have used the term "tipping point" to describe how an infectious disease suddenly escalates from a few outbreaks to a full-on epidemic. If we tolerate just a little discourtesy, we invite rampant discourtesy. Forgetting to say "Good Morning," "Thank you," "Excuse me," "Please," and "May I..." encourages blatant incivility. People stop holding doors for each other, they don't wait for others to hop on an elevator, and they don't move aside to let others pass them in the hallways. Would you like to work in this kind of an environment? Not unless you have rocks in your head. Don't underestimate the importance of simple courtesy.

3. What is a surefire way of ticking off workmates when sharing a communal kitchen or dining lounge?

Inconsiderately leaving the place a mess.

Do you want to be perceived as a lout? Simply leave any housekeeping tasks to your colleagues and watch how quickly you become persona non grata. Don't litter countertops and tables with your dirty plates, silverware or food wrappers. Clean up after yourself. It is unpleasant for others to have to clean up after you, and a break room should be uncluttered and agreeable. No one wants to relax or eat a meal in a pig sty.

4. What vice can torpedo your admission to the career fast track?

Using Profanity.

Profanity is just the order of the day, correct? No sir! Despite the fact that we HEAR vulgar language on the radio, in films, in some kinds of music and on the sidewalk, it is NOT mainstream. Plenty of folks are offended by off-color language, and you need to remember that when you are associating with others. Think of it this way: It's more about the fact that you don't care if your language bothers the folks around you and less about the profanity itself.

Whether on the phone, in a meeting or in ordinary conversation—no one person should dominate the chatter.

5. What common act of oafishness labels you a loser?

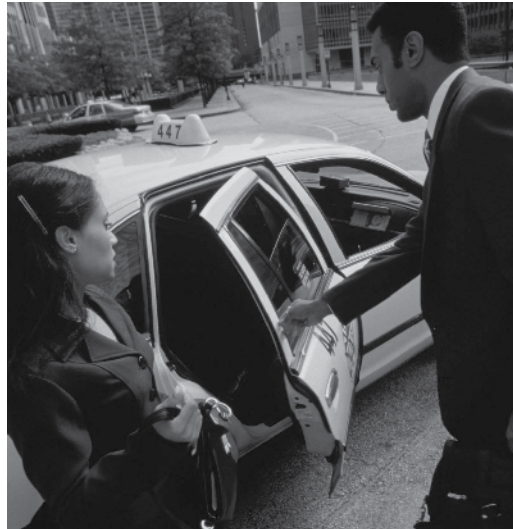
Talking at the top of your lungs in a working environment.

I couldn't write an article about rude behavior without including at least one paragraph about the abuse of cell phones, Bluetooth devices and workplace speaker phones. No matter what device you are using or who you are speaking to, it is NEVER a good idea to raise the volume of your voice so that anyone in your vicinity can overhear what you are saying. It's ridiculous to expect your colleagues to get their work done if you are loudly blathering on in the next cubicle or outside the door of an office. Be respectful of others and speak in a normal tone of voice.

6. The failure to extend this courtesy will turn off your colleagues faster than a speeding bullet. What is it?

Ignoring People.

Never underestimate the good will that an acknowledgement will create. So often in our hurried lifestyles, we forget to greet people with a smile or a polite nod. Ignoring someone as you pass in the hallway or enter a room is unacceptable and hurtful. What kind of message are you sending if you avert your eyes or pretend that another co-worker is invisible? A moment or two of courtesy goes a long way toward building morale. ●



I couldn't write an article about rude behavior without including at least one paragraph about the abuse of cell phones ...