



Ten Tips for Respect and Civility in the Workplace

Does your workplace pass the civility test? In a respectful workplace, employees are courteous, caring, and considerate in their interactions with one another, as well as with customers, clients and the public.

For workers, a civil and respectful workplace can translate into greater job satisfaction, greater perceptions of fairness, and a more positive attitude. The organization's bottom line benefits from improved morale, better teamwork, enhanced supervisor-staff relationships, and reduction in sick leave and turnover. When people are treated with respect, they take a greater interest in personal development, engage in problem solving, and generally enjoy their environment more.

So how do you get there? Here are ten tips to help make respect and civility the standard in your workplace:

1. Train and Develop

Provide training and resources on civil and respectful workplace behaviours such as listening, giving feedback, conflict resolution, anger management, and dealing with difficult customers. It's also important that staff learn to recognize what constitutes uncivil behaviour and how to address it.

2. Incorporate Respect and Civility in Your Communications

Adopt non-discriminatory language and maintain the confidentiality of employees' personal information in all communications. Ensure that communications are easy to find and accessible to all by prominently displaying on bulletin boards, in employee handbooks, or online.

3. Give Your Full Attention

Basic respect is the foundation of working relationships. A civil workplace is one where everyone's input is recognized, valued and where our attention is focused on the conversation at hand. This focus means giving people and meetings your undivided attention. Be sure to turn off your cell phone or any other device that may distract you. If you're going to be late for a meeting, let the organizer know in advance.

4. Use Respectful Language

Please... Thank you... Excuse me... I'm sorry are words that you can use regularly to establish civility. Express appreciation to co-workers for their help, avoid interrupting others when they are speaking, and apologize with sincerity if you have mistakenly offended someone. These seemingly small gestures all help to contribute to an overall culture of a respectful workplace.

5. Say Hello

In an uneasy work environment, it is commonplace for co-workers to not even greet each other. Next time you're passing a colleague in the hallway or seeing them in the lunchroom, acknowledge them

by saying “Hello”. Courtesy is infectious and helps build positive morale.

6. Be Considerate When You Speak

Humour in the workplace can take many forms and not all of them are appropriate nor appreciated by everyone. Before making a joke, pause to consider your audience. Is the joke at someone else’s expense? Might it be embarrassing or demeaning? If the answer is yes to any of these, then don’t share the joke.

7. Be Inclusive

Be courteous, friendly – these actions foster a positive working culture. Find out how co-workers would like to be addressed. Avoid giving people nicknames or pet names as that can be seen as belittling and patronizing. Look for opportunities to include others that you may not generally socialize with by acknowledging their birthday, inviting them to lunch, or asking for their input. Everyone wants to be recognized and have a sense of belonging. It can be very rewarding to bridge social barriers to discover new associations.

8. Practice Humility

Give others credit when they do a good job. By being modest and raising others, you can contribute to building a culture of generosity and trust, while allowing others to share in the satisfaction of a job well done.

9. Be a Role Model

Promote and reinforce respectful leadership behaviour. Provide managers and supervisors with appropriate training and supports, and ensure that they are available, present, and in contact with workers to be able to recognize and resolve issues.

10. Address Uncivil Behaviour

In addition to demonstrating the type of behaviour we expect from others, it is equally important for employers to address situations that affect civility. Create and enforce guidelines and policies detailing expectations, and consequences for inappropriate behaviour. Allow for constructive problem-solving. Manage conflicts in an effective and timely fashion, and ensure follow-up with all parties involved.

Practicing small, everyday acts of civility, care, and consideration can go a long way to help everyone feel safe, comfortable, and respected at work.

Resources:

- Psychosocial Factors (<https://www.guardingmindsatwork.ca/about/about-psychosocial-factors>), Guarding Minds at Work
- Psychologically Healthy and Safe Workplaces - Workplace Factors (<https://www.ccohs.ca/products/boutique/13factors/>) fast fact card, CCOHS
- Respect: Everyone Deserves It (<https://www.ccohs.ca/products/posters/respect/>) poster, CCOHS

- [Healthy Minds at Work \(https://www.ccohs.ca/healthyminds/\)](https://www.ccohs.ca/healthyminds/) website

The [Health and Safety Report \(http://www.ccohs.ca/newsletters/hsreport/\)](http://www.ccohs.ca/newsletters/hsreport/), a free monthly newsletter produced by the [Canadian Centre for Occupational Health and Safety \(http://www.ccohs.ca\)](http://www.ccohs.ca) (CCOHS), provides information, advice, and resources that help support a safe and healthy work environment and the total well being of workers.

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