



Building a Thriving Culture

*Workplace Civility as the Foundation of a
Successful Modern Organization*

Why are we Here?

*The Society of
Human Resources
has a critical
initiative, and we
dig it!*

Advancing Civility in Your Workplace

In 2024, SHRM put civility in the forefront, launching the initiative “[1M Civil Conversations](#).” According to SHRM research, over half of US workers believe our society is uncivil. To help HR professionals evaluate civility on their teams, SHRM developed the [Civility Index](#), a free tool designed to gauge civility in your workplace and facilitate civil conversations internally.

At Omnia Vincit Amor, we believe in the work and leadership research of thought leaders like Brene Brown, and we want to help build more deeply caring organizations that operate with Civility as a foundation for courage, openness, and inclusion.

Our Plan

1

Describe workplace incivility and civility.

2

Provide context and data on the importance of pursuing more civility in our organizations.

3

Focus on three key areas of civility

- Psychological Safety
- Empathy (Emotional Intelligence)
- Courage and Accountability

Knowing the Enemy (Workplace Incivility)

Workplace incivility has been defined as low-intensity deviant behavior with ambiguous intent to harm the target. Uncivil behaviors are characteristically rude and discourteous, displaying a lack of regard for others.

What is Workplace Civility

Authentic respect for others,
requiring time, presence, a
willingness to engage in genuine
discourse, and an intention to
seek common ground.

-Dr. Cynthia Clark, Founder of Civility Matters

Our Case for Addressing Incivility



Productivity and Well-being:

Incivility negatively affects productivity, with each incident resulting in an average 30 minutes of lost productivity per worker, totaling significant financial losses daily.



Cycle of Incivility:

Witnessing or experiencing incivility can lead employees to replicate these behaviors, which perpetuates a cycle of negative interactions across teams.



Employee Turnover:

Workplaces where incivility is prevalent see higher turnover rates, with affected employees more likely to seek new job opportunities due to stress and dissatisfaction.



Mental and Physical Health:

Regular exposure to uncivil behaviors can increase stress, reduce morale, and even contribute to physical symptoms such as headaches and fatigue, particularly in persistently uncivil work environments.



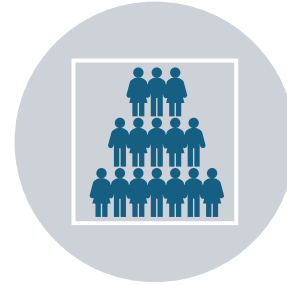
Generational Sensitivities:

Generational differences often exacerbate tensions, with younger employees (Millennials and Gen Z) placing higher value on respect and civility and being more vocal about uncivil behaviors compared to older generations.

Why Civility Matters to our CEOs



Cost Reduction: Incivility costs organizations approximately \$2.17 billion daily in lost productivity and absenteeism.



Talent Retention: Civil workplaces are 25% more likely to retain top talent, saving recruitment and training costs.



Innovation and Engagement: Civility fosters a safe space for idea-sharing, critical for innovation and employee engagement.



Financial Stability: Companies investing in civility see a positive impact on reputation, reducing customer complaints and enhancing brand loyalty.

Civility Index (Ongoing Insights on Civility)

SHRM has launched the Civility Index, which gauges how often people say they have experienced or witnessed uncivil behavior. SHRM asked 1,611 U.S. workers how often they experience or witness uncivil behavior in their daily lives and in the workplace.

SHRM's Q1 2024 Civility Index score was 42.3 out of 100. Indicating a need for organizations to take action to prevent incivility from escalating.

Releasing the initial data in February 2024, SHRM has continued to evaluate civility quarterly.



Civility Index (Ongoing Insights on Civility)

A few updates from the Q3 Civil Index

- There continues to be small increases in incivility of everyday life (society).
- The workplace continues to have slightly less incivility than society but did see an increase in incivility in Q3.
- Differences in political viewpoints saw a sharp increase in incivility in Q3.



What are we Specifically Talking About When it Comes to Incivility?

Research on Top 5 most common forms of Incivility in the workplace*

1. Intentionally interrupting or speaking over each other in conversations (10.8%)
2. Rudeness or inconsiderate (10.1%)
3. Gossiping or spreading rumors (9.9%)
4. Behaving selfishly or with their own interests in mind rather than what is best for the team/organization (9.9%)
5. Not apologizing or holding themselves accountable when they have made a mistake(7.9%)

Type of Incivility	Definition	Examples
Disrespectful Communication	Using unkind, dismissive, or sarcastic language in interactions with colleagues.	Interrupting others during meetings, making condescending remarks, or ignoring feedback.
Passive-Aggressive Behavior	Exhibiting hostile attitudes indirectly rather than through open communication.	Subtly undermining a colleague's ideas, giving backhanded compliments, or ignoring emails as a form of silent resistance.
Exclusionary Actions	Deliberately leaving someone out of meetings, decisions, or team activities.	Not inviting a team member to a group discussion, leaving someone out of key communication chains.
Gossip and Rumors	Spreading unverified information or rumors about a colleague.	Talking about a coworker's personal issues or speculating about others' job performance or relationships.
Intimidation or Bullying	Using one's position or authority to pressure or demean others.	Threatening performance reviews influence behavior, ridiculing team members in front of others.
Self-Centered Behavior	Prioritizing personal needs and goals over team collaboration.	Ignoring team protocols to achieve individual success, refusing to share credit or workload with others.
Unprofessional Nonverbal Cues	Displaying dismissive or hostile nonverbal signals.	Eye-rolling, sighing in frustration, or avoiding eye contact during a conversation.
Unwillingness to Apologize or Be Accountable	Avoiding responsibility for one's actions and failing to make amends when mistakes are made.	Not admitting fault in a team error, neglecting to apologize after a conflict with a peer.
Ignoring Social Boundaries	Disregarding workplace norms or colleagues' personal boundaries.	Overstepping privacy by asking personal questions, or disregarding colleague availability outside work hours.



What Can we do to Increase Civility?



BUILD A FOUNDATION OF
PSYCHOLOGICAL SAFETY



DEVELOP OR EMOTIONAL
INTELLIGENCE, FOCUSING ON
EMPATHY

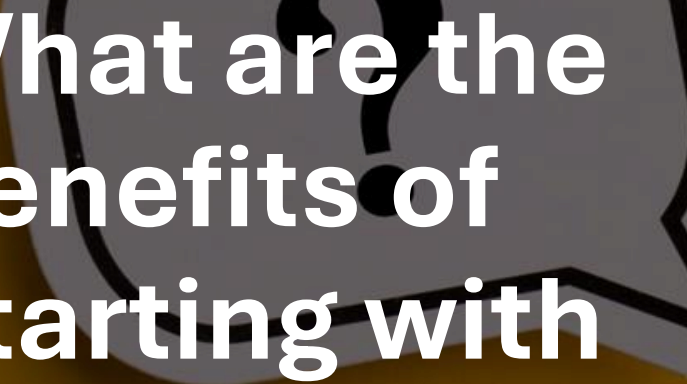


BE COURAGEOUS AND
ACCOUNTABLE

Psychological Safety as a Foundation

What is Workplace Psychological Safety?

Psychological safety refers to an individual's perception of the consequences of taking an interpersonal risk or a belief that a team is safe for risk taking in the face of being seen as ignorant, incompetent, negative, or disruptive. In a team with high psychological safety, teammates feel safe to take risks around their team members. They feel confident that no one on the team will embarrass or punish anyone else for admitting a mistake, asking a question, or offering a new idea. (Google Rework)



What are the Benefits of Starting with Psychological Safety?

Psychological Safety Fosters Open Communication and Reduces Incivility

When employees feel safe to express themselves without fear of ridicule or punishment, they are more likely to engage in open and respectful dialogue. *They don't feel the need to armor up.* Psychological safety allows employees to “speak up” about issues without retribution, which reduces passive-aggressive behavior and encourages proactive problem-solving. This openness builds trust, decreases misunderstanding, and creates a civil work environment.

Psychological Safety Reduces Employee Stress

Psychological safety decreases stress by allowing employees to work without constant fear of negative judgment, making them less likely to feel the need to “watch their backs” or second-guess interactions. When employees feel safe, they're less defensive and more engaged, which reduces absenteeism and turnover, key metrics often affected by a lack of civility.

Psychological Safety Promotes Accountability and Integrity

In an environment of psychological safety, employees feel comfortable acknowledging their errors, which cultivates accountability and integrity. This openness fosters a respectful, civil culture where everyone is committed to mutual improvement rather than blame-shifting or finger-pointing.

Opportunities for Psychological Safety

Model Vulnerability and Openness

As leaders we should set the tone by openly admitting mistakes and demonstrating a willingness to learn from feedback. For example, sharing a personal lesson from a past error during a team meeting helps create an environment where admitting mistakes is normalized.

Encourage Constructive Feedback

Create structured opportunities for feedback, such as regular one-on-one sessions where employees can share concerns and ideas without fear of reprisal. Others will be evaluating your reaction, focus on being appreciative. For example, closing meetings lead with an opportunity to provide feedback on what worked and what didn't.

Establish Clear, Inclusive Communication Norms

Define and uphold norms for respectful interactions during team meetings, explicitly encouraging inclusive participation. For instance, encourage quieter team members to share their ideas and ensure that all perspectives are valued.

Emotional Intelligence and Empathy

Our Focus:

Empathy,

The action of understanding, being aware of, being sensitive to, and vicariously experiencing the feelings, thoughts, and experience of another. (www.merriam-webster.com)

“Empathy begins with understanding life from another person's perspective. Nobody has an objective experience of reality. It's all through our own individual prisms.”

– Sterling K. Brown



Resource: Daniel Goleman's Framework for Emotional Intelligence

Empathy's Role in the New World of Work



Reduce turnover by up to 25%.

SHRM reports that empathetic leaders, particularly as employees feel more understood and value.



2.3 times more likely to be engaged at work.

Gallup reported that employees who feel their managers genuinely care about their being are twice as engaged as direct reports of less empathetic leaders.



61% more innovative.

Catalyst research revealed that employees who work in an empathetic environment are more creative and innovative.



More collaborative.

Research from the Center for Creative Leadership *found that 75% of leaders identified empathy as a primary driver of effective team collaboration.*



30% increase in customer satisfaction.

Research published by Forbes highlights that companies prioritizing empathy see a significantly higher customer satisfaction due to the positive trickle-down effect of an empathetic work culture.

Quick Empathy Check-in

Empathy Self-Assessment

Rate each statement on a scale from 1 to 5 and total each rating.

1	2	3	4	5
Rarely True	Sometimes True	Neutral	Often True	Always True

Statements

1. I make an effort to understand how others feel, even if I disagree with them.
2. When listening to someone, I focus on their words without interrupting or preparing my response.
3. I notice when someone's tone of voice or body language doesn't match their words.
4. I find myself imagining how I would feel in another person's situation.
5. I respond with genuine concern and support when others share difficult emotions.

Evaluating

20-25: Strong empathy skills

15-19: Moderate empathy; room for growth

Below 15: Opportunities to build empathy skills further

Simple Opportunities for Emotional Intelligence and Empathy

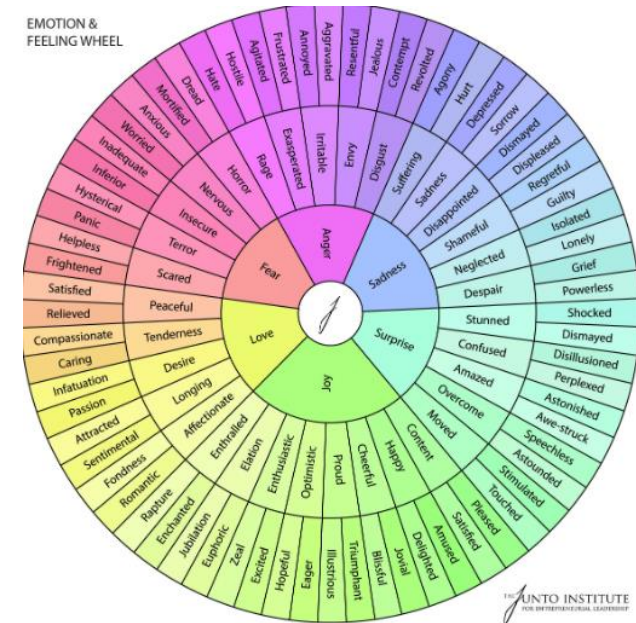
Try Perspective Taking and Emotion Identification

First: When someone is speaking, focus on their words without forming your response right away. Pay attention to nonverbal cues like tone and body language, which often convey additional emotional information.

Next: When in conversation or reflecting on a situation, ask yourself, “What if I were in their position?” or “How might I feel if I were experiencing this?” Imagine the details as vividly as possible. Rather than reflect on the exact same situation in can be helpful to consider a time you yourself felt the same level of emotions as a way to grounded in to empathizing. (Train yourself to imagine different perspectives actively)

Need More:

- *Build emotional fluency. Read Atlas of the Heart by Brene Brown to build understanding of emotional complexity and/or consider purchasing an emotion wheel like the one created by the J unto Institute and practice identifying your feelings regarding different situations.*
- *Reflect on moments when you may have judged someone too quickly or assumed a specific intention. Notice any patterns in your reactions and remind yourself to check these biases when trying to understand others’ perspectives.*
- *Try Perspective Journaling. At the end of the day, jot down one or two interactions you had and write from the other person’s perspective. Consider what their needs, concerns, and feelings might have been in the situation.*



Courage and Accountability

Courage Enables Open and Honest Communication

For civility to thrive, employees need the courage to speak openly about concerns or uncivil behaviors. According to research from SHRM, honest, direct communication helps prevent misunderstandings and resolve conflicts before they escalate. Leaders who model courageous conversations promote a culture of respect where employees feel empowered to address issues constructively rather than letting resentment

Courage and Accountability Build Trust and Support Psychological Safety

Employees are more engaged and perform better when they trust their environment to be fair and safe. Leaders who have the courage to hold themselves and others accountable create a sense of psychological safety where employees feel respected, valued, and motivated to contribute to a collaborative and positive workplace culture

Accountability Reinforces Boundaries of Respectful Behavior

Accountability ensures that employees and leaders uphold agreed-upon standards of respectful interaction. Research emphasizes that without clear consequences, incivility can spread, as employees see that negative behaviors go unchecked. Accountability is vital for setting boundaries, reinforcing that uncivil behaviors are not tolerated, and showing that respect is a core organizational value.

Opportunity for Courage and Accountability

Try the practice of Loyalty In Absence (the counter to gossip)

In *7 Habits of Highly Effective People*, Covey explains that loyalty in absence is about refraining from speaking negatively about others and instead, protecting their reputation as if they were in the room. This principle fosters a workplace culture of trust, respect, and integrity, where employees feel secure and valued, reducing the inclination toward gossip.

Redirect Negative Conversations

Example: *If a colleague begins speaking negatively about another team member who isn't present, redirect the conversation by focusing on the absent person's strengths/positive previous experiences or suggesting a direct conversation with that person instead.*

Reframe Complaints into Problem-Solving

Example: *If someone shares complaints about a coworker's performance, shift the focus to finding solutions. You might say, "How can we support them to improve in this area?"*

Publicly Recognize Contributions

Example: *When a team member's contributions are discussed, make a point of acknowledging their positive impact, even if they are not present to hear it.*

Promoting Organizational Civility

Implement Clear Policies: Develop and enforce policies that define acceptable behavior, create clarity across the organization on what incivility looks like, and outline consequences for incivility. Assess existing policies for opportunities to enhance clarity on addressing incivility.

- Create shared understanding and clarity around acts of incivility (example: *Is texting during a meeting appropriate or not in your organization? How is interrupting handled?*)
- Provide training focused on building civility (check out the ***Addressing Workplace Incivility Resource***)

Recognize and Reward Civility: Acknowledge and reward employees who demonstrate civil behavior. Implement recognition programs or awards that celebrate acts of kindness, teamwork, and positive communication, reinforcing the importance of civility in the workplace.

- Studies by psychologists such as Emily Heaphy and Marcial Losada, as well as research adapted from John Gottman's relationship studies, demonstrate that this 5:1 ratio significantly boosts team performance, motivation, and engagement.

Lead by Example: Leaders and managers should model civil behavior. Demonstrate respect, empathy, and active listening in all interactions. Your actions set the tone for the rest of the team.

What is one specific action you will commit to today to promote civility in our workplace, and how will you hold yourself accountable for it?

Consider the unique attributes of your organization and what resonated most for you.

Resources

Workplace Civility

- <https://www.shrm.org/content/dam/en/shrm/topics-tools/topics/civility/shrm-q3-civility-index-abstract.pdf>
- https://www.ted.com/talks/christine_porath_why_being_respectful_to_your_coworkers_is_good_for_business/transcript
- [Make Civility the Norm on Your Team](#) (Harvard Business Review)

Psychological Safety

- [What Is Psychological Safety?](#) (Harvard Business Review)
- [Google's Project Aristotle - Psych Safety](#)

Empathy

- [Atlas of the Heart - Brené Brown](#)
- [Self-Compassion by Kristin Neff: Join the Community Now](#)
- [Defining Empathy - Daniel Goleman](#)