Nine Tools of Civility

1. Pay Attention
Be aware and attend to the world and the people around you.
• Be informed about what is occurring in our community
• Focus on the issue - on what the person is saying
• Consider the whole picture; issues are connected
• Open your mind to new perspectives; strive for objectivity

2. Listen
Focus on others in order to better understand their points of view.
• Seek to understand; hear what is said
• Ask effective questions
• Respect the person and his/her view through your words and body language
• Give thoughtful attention; avoid distractions such as: your emotion, multi-tasking, or formulating a response instead of listening

3. Be Inclusive
Welcome all groups of citizens working for the greater good of the community.
• Know the community system in order to be inclusive (social, economic, environmental, technical, etc.)
• Intentionally and sincerely invite diverse perspectives
• Seek participation; take responsibility; include yourself!
• Use common language; avoid jargon

4. Don’t Gossip
And don’t accept when others choose to do so.
• Go to the source for the facts; validate the information
• Communicate with respect and a positive intent; own what you say; be accountable
• Model integrity and mutual respect; set a good example for others
• Honor those who are not present

5. Show Respect
Honor other people and their opinions, especially in the midst of a disagreement.
• Value the person; appreciate his/her contributions, experiences, passion, culture, norms and values
• Use questions to clarify
• Value ideas that are brought to the table
• Demonstrate positive body language

6. Seek Common Ground
Look for opportunities to agree; don’t contradict just to do so.
• Rise above emotions; focus on the issues
• Build relationships; make a connection
• Work toward mutual trust

7. Repair Damaged Relationships
Be sincere; apologize and forgive.
• Take responsibility for your actions and words
• Accept an apology
• Practice forgiveness; let go of the past

8. Use Constructive Language
Be mindful of the words you choose.
• Address conflict with the intent of resolution
• When disagreeing, stick to the issues and don’t make a personal attack
• Learn from others’ perspectives and feedback

9. Take Responsibility
Practice accountability in language and actions.
• Take ownership; use “I” statements
• Don’t shift responsibility and blame onto others
• Be trustworthy
• Tell the truth