

Choosing Civility

THE TWENTY-FIVE RULES
of CONSIDERATE
CONDUCT



"One of those rare gems... this book is about how we ought to treat each other.

What could be more important than that?"

—EDWARD HALLOWELL, M.D., author of

Connect and *The Childhood Roots of Adult Happiness*

P. M. Forni

Cofounder of the Johns Hopkins Civility Project

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What Is Civility?



MAYBE I WAS COMING DOWN WITH CHANGE-OF-SEASON INFLU- ENZA. IF SO, I SHOULD REALLY CONSIDER BUYING A LITTLE WHITE HALF MASK FOR MY SUBWAY RIDE HOME.

—Sujata Massey

For many years literature was my life. I spent most of my time reading, teaching, and writing on Italian fiction and poetry. One day, while lecturing on the *Divine Comedy*, I looked at my students and realized that I wanted them to be kind human beings more than I wanted them to know about Dante. I told them that if they knew everything about Dante and then they went out and treated an elderly lady on the bus unkindly, I'd feel that I had failed as a teacher. I have given dozens of lectures and workshops on civility in the last few years, and I have derived much satisfaction from addressing audiences I could not have reached speaking on literature. I know, however, that reading literature can develop the kind of imagination without which civility is impossible. To be fully human we must be able to imagine others' hurt and to relate it to the hurt we would experience if we were in their place. Consideration is imagination on a moral track.

Sometimes the participants in my workshops write on a sheet of paper what civility means to them. In no particular order, here are a number of key civility-related notions I have collected over the years from those sheets:

Respect for others	Community service
Care	Tact
Consideration	Equality
Courtesy	Sincerity
Golden rule	Morality
Respect of others' feelings	Honesty
Niceness	Awareness
Politeness	Trustworthiness
Respect of others' opinions	Friendship
Maturity	Table manners
Kindness	Moderation
Manners	Listening
Being accommodating	Compassion
Fairness	Being agreeable
Decency	Going out of one's way
Self-control	Friendliness
Concern	Lending a hand
Justice	Propriety
Tolerance	Abiding by rules
Selflessness	Good citizenship
Etiquette	Peace

This list tells us that

- Civility is complex.
- Civility is good.

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- Whatever civility might be, it has to do with courtesy, politeness, and good manners.
- Civility belongs in the realm of ethics.

These four points have guided me in writing this book. Like my workshop participants, I am inclusive rather than exclusive in defining civility. Courtesy, politeness, manners, and civility are all, in essence, forms of awareness. Being civil means being constantly aware of others and weaving restraint, respect, and consideration into the very fabric of this awareness. Civility is a form of goodness; it is gracious goodness. But it is not just an attitude of benevolent and thoughtful relating to other individuals; it also entails an active interest in the well-being of our communities and even a concern for the health of the planet on which we live.

Saying "please" and "thank you"; lowering our voice whenever it may threaten or interfere with others' tranquillity; raising funds for a neighborhood renovation program; acknowledging a newcomer to the conversation; welcoming a new neighbor; listening to understand and help; respecting those different from us; responding with restraint to a challenge; properly disposing of a piece of trash left by someone else; properly disposing of dangerous industrial pollutants; acknowledging our mistakes; refusing to participate in malicious gossip; making a new pot of coffee for the office machine after drinking the last cup; signaling our turns when driving; yielding our seat on a bus whenever it seems appropriate; alerting the person sitting behind us on a plane when we are about to lower the back of our seat; standing close to the right-side handrail on an escalator; stopping to give directions to someone who is lost; stopping at red lights; disagreeing with poise; yielding with grace when losing an argument, these diverse behaviors are all imbued with the spirit of civility.

Civility, courtesy, politeness, and manners are not perfect synonyms, as etymology clearly shows.

IN LIFE COURTESY AND SELF-POSSESSION, AND IN THE ARTS STYLE, ARE THE SENSIBLE IMPRESSIONS OF THE FREE MIND, FOR BOTH ARISE OUT OF A DELIBERATE SHAPING OF ALL THINGS, AND FROM NEVER BEING SWEEPED AWAY, WHATEVER THE EMOTION, INTO CONFUSION OR DULLNESS.

—*William Butler Yeats*

Courtesy is connected to *court* and evoked in the past the superior qualities of character and bearing expected in those close to royalty. Etymologically, when we are courteous we are courtierlike. Although today we seldom make this connection, courtesy still suggests excellence and elegance in bestowing respect and attention. It can also suggest deference and formality.

THE VERY ESSENCE OF POLITENESS SEEMS TO BE TO TAKE CARE THAT BY OUR WORDS AND ACTIONS WE MAKE OTHER PEOPLE PLEASED WITH US AS WELL AS WITH THEMSELVES.

—*Jean de La Bruyère*

To understand *politeness*, we must think of *polish*. The polite are those who have polished their behavior. They have put some effort into bettering themselves, but they are sometimes looked upon with suspicion. Expressions such as “polite reply,” “polite lie,” and “polite applause” connect politeness to hypocrisy. It is true that the polite are inclined to veil their own feelings to spare someone else’s. Self-serving lying, however, is always beyond the pale of

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politeness. If politeness is a quality of character (alongside courtesy, good manners, and civility), it cannot become a flaw. A suave manipulator may appear to be polite but is not.

THERE IS ALWAYS A BEST WAY OF DOING EVERYTHING. IF
IT BE TO BOIL AN EGG. MANNERS ARE THE HAPPY WAY OF
DOING THINGS; EACH ONCE A STROKE OF GENIUS OR OF
LOVE, NOW REPEATED AND HARDENED INTO USAGE.
—Ralph Waldo Emerson

When we think of good *manners* we often think of children being taught to say "please" and "thank you" and chew with their mouths closed. This may prevent us from looking at manners with the attention they deserve. *Manner* comes from *manus*, the Latin word for "hand." *Manner* and *manners* have to do with the use of our hands. A manner is the way something is done, a mode of handling. Thus *manners* came to refer to behavior in social interaction—the way we handle the encounter between Self and Other. We have good manners when we use our hands well—when we handle others with care. When we rediscover the connection of *manner* with *hand*, the hand that, depending on our will and sensitivity, can strike or lift, hurt or soothe, destroy or heal, we understand the importance—for children and adults alike—of having good manners.

BEING CIVIL TO ONE ANOTHER IS MUCH MORE ACTIVE AND
POSITIVE A GOOD THAN MERE POLITENESS OR COURTESY,
BUT LIKE MANY OTHER IMPORTANT GOODS, SUCH AS GEN-
EROSITY, GRATITUDE, OR SOLIDARITY, IT IS NOT THE SORT
OF THING THAT CAN BE "DEMANDED" AS A MATTER OF
DUTY, LIKE A MORAL ENTITLEMENT. —Robert B. Pippin

Civility's defining characteristic is its ties to *city* and *society*. The word derives from the Latin *civitas*, which means "city," especially in the sense of civic community. *Civitas* is the same word from which *civilization* comes. The age-old assumption behind civility is that life in the city has a civilizing effect. The city is where we enlighten our intellect and refine our social skills. And as we are shaped by the city, we learn to give of ourselves for the sake of the city. Although we can describe the civil as courteous, polite, and well mannered, etymology reminds us that they are also supposed to be good citizens and good neighbors.

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Respect in Action



Living according to the principle of respect for persons is difficult. And yet we can do it, thanks in part to our ability to identify with others and—at least to a certain extent—to feel what they feel. This ability is empathy.

EMPATHY SHINES ITS LIGHT ON OUR DEEPEST NEEDS, NEVER ALLOWING US TO FORGET THAT OUR VERY SURVIVAL DEPENDS ON OUR ABILITY TO ACCURATELY UNDERSTAND AND SENSITIVELY RESPOND TO EACH OTHER.

—*Arthur P. Ciaramicoli and Katherine Ketcham*

The extraordinary relevance of the rules of civility to our lives is that by following them we put into everyday practice the principle of respect for persons. Civility does the work of empathy.

With a training in civility we develop the invaluable habit of considering that no action of ours is without consequences for others and anticipating what those consequences will be. We learn to act in a responsible and caring way. Choosing civility means choosing to do the right thing for others—for the “city.” The by-product of doing justice to others is the enrichment of our own lives. I hope that we will never tire of rediscovering that being kind is good for the kind.

Yes, we live in an age of radical individualism and cultural relativism. Yes, the lack of meaningful coherence in our lives can be disheartening. And yes, sometimes we feel lost because of the dizzying amount and variety of information readily available in a world enveloped by the uninterrupted buzz of the electronic media. But we need not succumb to bafflement, indifference, or despair. “Our countless private codes which we each shape and reshape according to our own selfish needs,” to use Peter Gadol’s words, are far from being our only viable reference for conducting the business of living. We needn’t “scramble like fools.” One thing we can do is act upon the realization that the quality of our lives depends upon our ability to relate and connect. Harmonious and caring relationships foster a happy life. In order to build such relationships, we need the respect, consideration, and kindness that we easily grant to and receive from our fellow humans when we are civil.

Happiness and the Mind



THE HAPPINESS OF YOUR LIFE DEPENDS UPON THE QUALITY OF
YOUR THOUGHTS.

—*Marcus Aurelius*

HAPPINESS DOES NOT DEPEND ON OUTWARD THINGS, BUT ON
THE WAY WE SEE THEM.

—*Leo Tolstoy*

The Bible, Gautama Buddha, Marcus Aurelius, Ralph Waldo Emerson, and William James are among the most frequently quoted sources of this momentous notion: our happiness does not spring from the events of our lives but rather from how we choose to respond to those events. Many students of human happiness see life satisfaction as a product of the thinking Self.

Our lives are made of events over which we have little or no control. What we *can* control is how we are going to think about those events. Although we cannot choose no traffic over congested highways for our back-to-work Monday-morning commute, we can choose how to react to traffic. Even in the worst of circumstances, we can react with positive thoughts. While stuck on a beltway in our motorized metal cocoons we can think that this is a good opportunity to do some serious, undisturbed work-related planning. Such a positive reaction to a nonpositive event will yield happy feelings rather than unhappy ones.

Our feelings are the products of our thoughts. A positive thought produces a feeling of contentment or happiness, a negative one a feeling of sadness or despondency. If we have control over what we *think* about what happens to us, we have control over how we *feel* about it as well. This means, in turn, that we can be the makers of our own happiness. To say that this is an empowering message is an understatement. It comes, however, with quite a burden of personal responsibility, since it prevents us from blaming our misery on our circumstances. Be that as it may, the pronouncement of a thousand thinkers is unequivocal: our contentment and happiness are a matter of personal attitude.

HE WHO HAS SUCH LITTLE KNOWLEDGE OF HUMAN VALUE AS TO SEEK HAPPINESS BY CHANGING ANYTHING BUT HIS DISPOSITION WILL WASTE HIS LIFE IN FRUITLESS EFFORTS AND MULTIPLY THE GRIEF HE PROPOSES TO REMOVE.

—*Samuel Johnson*

Who wouldn't want to acquire an attitude that invites happiness into our lives? Unfortunately, having a positive attitude is not as simple as putting on new clothes. I think that we should take the invitation to self-reliance with a modicum of common sense. To say that we are to look inside ourselves for ways to cope successfully with the difficulties of life doesn't mean that we should ignore the outside world. Our relationships with others are an invaluable resource of meaning and happiness.

THERE IS NO JOY EXCEPT IN HUMAN RELATIONSHIPS.

—*Antoine de Saint-Exupéry*

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When we excel in the art of sustaining good relationships we can afford to be less than perfect in the art of a positive attitude. And contentment and joy will come to us in unalloyed form.

How Do We Learn to Love?



Of course, human relationships are not always joyful. Sigmund Freud saw the quest for happiness as central to the human experience. What do human beings want? They "want to become happy and to remain so" was his famous answer. He went on to list the threats to this program of pleasure. Suffering can come from our sickness-prone bodies and from the destructive forces of nature. But the single most painful source of unhappiness, he observed, is perhaps our relationships with others.

Others inevitably limit our individual gratification. If there are two of us and only one apple, I may feel I should give you half of it even if I'd rather eat it all. Or you may take my apple from me. In this sense, the happiness of others is where our happiness ends. However, we also perceive others as a source of happiness. Giving you half of my apple may in fact give me more pleasure than eating the whole apple. Keeping away from others to avoid getting hurt just won't do. Our challenge is to pursue relationships while

keeping at a minimum the hurt that they entail. How can we do that?

When confronting a hurtful event, we can try to activate our internal discipline. We can apply our positive attitude. Here I am more interested in what we can do to prevent hurtful events from happening in the first place. Although we do not have total control over the events that affect our lives, we do have some. We can make it so that certain events will be more likely to occur than others. There is a proven way to keep the hurt that comes from relationships to a minimum, and that is by training ourselves to become good at being with others. How to acquire this invaluable behavioral literacy is not a mystery. A training in civility is part of our basic training as social beings. Civility is the preventive medicine we need.

"Forget love. Try good manners," is the parting shot in a barbed letter that Siddalee, the protagonist of Rebecca Wells's novel *Divine Secrets of the Ya-Ya Sisterhood*, receives from her mother, Vivi. Since nobody really knows how to love, says Vivi, we must, at least, be nice to one another. I find Vivi's utterance striking, even though I disagree with the bleak assessment behind it. We often do know how to love. We know how to love when we have developed a sensitivity to the feelings and needs of others. The problem is not that humans are by nature incapable of knowing how to love, but that the circumstances of their lives often prevent them from learning.

I am optimistic about our ability to better ourselves. We can learn to be decent and caring; we can learn to give of ourselves; we can learn to love. How do we do that? The same way we learn how to speak, read, swim, or ride a bicycle: we need somebody to teach us, and we need practice. The reason I like Vivi's advice is that I read it as saying that love is a point of arrival, a goal difficult to achieve, and before we think we can love we need basic training. First things first. First we discipline our ego to look beyond the

narrow confines of its immediate needs; then we will have a chance to understand what real love is. First manners, then love. After the training there will be those who are able to love others, even strangers, as they love themselves. And there will be those whose love will be confined to their friends and family. All, however, will have learned to practice respect, restraint, concern, and benevolence to some degree. Manners are the first steps of the soul toward love.

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Civility and Self-Expression



EMOTIONAL SELF-CONTROL IS NOT THE SAME AS OVERCONTROL, THE STIFLING OF ALL FEELING AND SPONTANEITY. . . . WHEN SUCH EMOTIONAL SUPPRESSION IS CHRONIC, IT CAN IMPAIR THINKING, HAMPER INTELLECTUAL PERFORMANCE AND INTERFERE WITH SMOOTH SOCIAL INTERACTION. BY CONTRAST, EMOTIONAL COMPETENCE IMPLIES WE HAVE A CHOICE AS TO HOW WE EXPRESS OUR FEELINGS.

—Daniel Goleman

RESTRAINT OFFERS A SPACE BETWEEN INTENTION AND ACTION AND THE OPPORTUNITY TO PROTECT OTHERS FROM ACTIONS OR REACTIONS THAT SHOULD EXIST ONLY IN YOUR IMAGINATION.

—Stephanie Dourick

Does civility impose restrictions on our everyday behavior? Of course it does. Does this mean that when we are civil we necessarily give up self-expression? No, it does not. Is civility a hindrance to our quest for a good life? It doesn't have to be, when it's practiced in a healthy way. In fact, the opposite is true. Civility is crucial to the achievement of a well-balanced and happy life.

- Sometimes we confuse having fun with being happy. The latter is virtually impossible without a personal history of restraint and discipline. Sometimes in order to reach happiness we must forgo fun.

- Civility is liberating. It frees us from slavery to self-absorption, impulse, and mood.
- Sometimes we confuse self-possession with self-denial. Civility's restraint has to do with the former, not the latter.

Self-expression belongs to the natural order of things. Indeed, we owe it to ourselves to express ourselves. There is something good and healthful in bringing forward and acting upon our thoughts and feelings. However, this doesn't mean that all we may want to express is equally worthy of expression. The unruly, the brazen, and the reckless give self-expression a bad name. Going through life under the sway of unchecked impulses may count as self-expression, but it is irresponsible self-indulgence—and painful collisions are sure to ensue. Self-expression at its best is instead a happy medium between self-effacement and self-indulgence.

RUDENESS IS THE WEAK MAN'S IMITATION OF STRENGTH.

—Eric Hoffer

In any given circumstance of life we have the alternative of stopping and thinking before acting—the alternative of restraint. Restraint is our inner designated driver. We all have it, and we all can learn to summon it whenever we need it. Instead of unthinkingly rushing into action, we can ask ourselves:

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- Is anybody going to be hurt by this?
- Will I like having done this?

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This allows us to make sound decisions. We are stuck in traffic, but we decide against rolling ahead of others down the emergency lane; we are incensed by a salesclerk's arrogant attitude, but we manage to remain both calm and assertive; although another car slips into our parking spot, we refuse to start the seemingly obligatory shouting match; we are exhausted after a long day, but we still listen patiently to our friend's seemingly endless carping.

Restraint is an infusion of thinking—and thoughtfulness—into everything we do. We choose the behavior that, although it may not seem the most gratifying now, will make us feel good five minutes from now, tomorrow, or next year. Restraint is the art of feeling good later. In fact, most of life's wisdom is about choosing what will make us feel good later.

While traveling by train in Italy, my wife, Virginia, and I found ourselves in the boisterous company of high school students on a day trip. I said nothing for ten uncomfortable minutes, hoping that they would settle down. Not a chance. Their continued disregard for the presence of others certainly fell short of charming, but what brought me close to an angry outburst was the acquiescence of their teachers. For a moment I felt like lashing out at both students and teachers. I knew immediately, though, that I wouldn't do so. I knew that later I wouldn't like having done it.

I made a conscious effort to remain clearheaded. Then, speaking in a quiet but firm tone, I asked the two students in the seats across the aisle to be so kind as to lower their voices so that I could have a conversation with Virginia. Rather than chastising them, I made them aware of my need. I informed them, but I made it clear that with the information came their responsibility to do something about it. Other students and the teachers overheard me. There was some nervous laughter and a few mockingly accentuated hushing noises. But there was also a general change in behavior. The remainder of the trip was substantially quieter,

and when we reached Rome we all said good-bye, wishing one another a pleasant visit.

It was restraint that made possible the satisfactory resolution of the incident. My restraint, and also the students'. Some may say that by being civil to each other we stifled our self-expression. But we can also say that we chose to express one part of ourselves rather than another. Although it may appear that we give up self-expression when we exercise it, in truth restraint can be as much an expression of our Selves as is unfettered behavior. Yes, practicing civility may limit our immediate gratification. That's why we are tempted to be rude. But civility at its best is not a threat to life fulfillment. Contentment does not reside in what civility tells us we shouldn't say or shouldn't do. Rather, contentment is, to a large extent, the result of many good choices we make as we interact with others. Civility assists us in making choices that increase the quality of our lives.

As a society we have done a good job of encouraging self-esteem, but not as good a job of teaching self-control. We all need self-esteem. Self-esteem is good, it keeps us sane, it is an immune system for our souls. However, when we are too focused on raising self-esteem, we swell the ranks of the self-absorbed. Many youngsters who have been fed supersized portions of self-esteem have trouble transcending their own immediate concerns, needs, and desires. Therefore they are not attentive, considerate, courteous, and kind. They are trapped in a narcissistic cage we have built for them. Whenever this happens, hurt is bound to ensue.

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Nice Guys Finish Last.
Or Do They?



WE HEAR OF A FUTURE WHERE RELATIONSHIPS ARE KEY AND PEOPLE ARE VALUED, WHERE NOT JUST THE TASK WELL PERFORMED BUT THE LIFE WELL LIVED IS WHAT COUNTS.

—Frances Hesselbein

Many people see no place for civility in a less-than-perfect world. They believe that in our aggressive and competitive society civility is a luxury they can't afford. If you are polite you are perceived as weak and you are brushed aside, they say. Being considerate and kind is hazardous to your self-esteem, professional ambitions, and net worth. So: check your sensitivity at the door, roll up your sleeves, don't pull any punches, and collect your prize.

It is not my intention to dismiss such an attitude. Can you achieve substantial results with it? Indeed you can, especially in the short run. The question is: do you want to win that way and can you see yourself winning that way?

Nice guys don't have to finish last. Not if they are also smart, imaginative, dedicated, and persevering. Niceness works as part of a winning combination. This is one of the few certainties on which we can rely when it comes to choosing our values and shaping our attitudes in both the personal and professional arenas.

When I think of the nice/civil person of the new century, I recall a passage by E. M. Forster, contained in his essay "What I Believe":

I believe in aristocracy . . . if that is the right word, and if a democrat may use it. Not an aristocracy of power, based upon rank and influence, but an aristocracy of the sensitive, the considerate and the plucky. Its members are to be found in all nations and all classes, and all through the ages, and there is a secret understanding between them when they meet. They represent the true human tradition, the one permanent victory of our queer race over cruelty and chaos. Thousands of them perish in obscurity, a few are great names. They are sensitive for others, as for themselves, they are considerate without being fussy, their pluck is not swankiness but the power to endure, and they can take a joke.

"Sensitive," "considerate," but also "plucky." Forster encourages us to be civil without self-effacement, to be sensitive and assertive at the same time, to practice respect for others as an extension of our self-respect, and to do all this with seriousness of intent and lightness of touch. To speak of pluck and the power to endure in the same breath with sensitivity and consideration; to speak of kindness as a kind of strength: this is quite a lesson. We may want to keep it in mind as we face the new century deciding what our next steps are going to be.

To be civil—to behave, that is, in a manner that takes into consideration the feelings and the comfort of others—means practicing the art of giving. This practice is at the same time free and binding. Although not obligatory (it is not prescribed by law), it creates a bond between those involved. When we are courteous, we expect to be answered in kind. Even a minimal transcending of the Self calls for a comparable transcending on the part of the

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Other. By treating you the best way I know how, I appeal to the best in you, urging you to do the same. The practice of civility is the applying of gentle force with the goal that everybody be a winner in the delicate game of the social exchange.

As an art, civility has rules one can learn and facility with these rules can improve with practice. This is the good news. The bad news is that often we are unable to imagine the benefits of that learning and practice. We thus leave untapped a resource that would prove invaluable in increasing the quality of our lives. This book is about the benefits of civility and the best ways to make them part of our everyday lives.

The Science of Love and Social Support



WHEN YOU FEEL LOVED, NURTURED, CARED FOR, SUPPORTED,
AND INTIMATE, YOU ARE MUCH MORE LIKELY TO BE HAPPIER
AND HEALTHIER. YOU HAVE A MUCH LOWER RISK OF GETTING
SICK AND, IF YOU DO, A MUCH GREATER CHANCE OF
SURVIVING.

—Dean Ornish

SOCIAL TIES ARE THE CHEAPEST MEDICINE WE HAVE.

—Shelley E. Taylor

- Healthy young men from two Harvard classes of the early 1950s were asked to fill out a questionnaire that would assess how close they were to their parents. A check of their medical records 35 years later yielded intriguing data. One hundred percent of the men who had reported low levels of closeness to both parents had been diagnosed in the following years with serious diseases such as heart disease and duodenal ulcer. Among those who had reported good, warm relationships with both parents only 47 percent had been similarly diagnosed.
- In 1965 Lisa Berkman—a pioneer in the field of mind-body medicine—and her colleagues recorded the social ties (marital status, friendships, church affiliation, etc.) of sev-

eral thousand men and women from Alameda County, California. Nine years later, in 1979, the researchers set out to assess the study participants' health. They found that the people living in isolation were dying at a rate 1.9 to 3.1 times higher than the people well integrated in their social environments. In the years following 1979, several other studies confirmed that lack of social connection presents a serious health risk.

- In the 1990s, Dr. Sheldon Cohen of Carnegie Mellon University and his collaborators assessed the extent of social connections of 276 healthy volunteers aged 18 to 55. Then they gave their subjects nasal drops containing one of two rhinoviruses, with the goal to monitor the insurgence of the common cold. The researchers found that, regardless of the virus they were given, the subjects who were part of diverse social networks were more effective in fighting off the cold. Those with six or more types of social ties fared four times better than those with one to three types.
- Dr. Janice Kiecolt-Glaser and her team at Ohio State University showed that separated and divorced men were not as healthy as married men. They also showed that men whose married lives were of poor quality had less effective immune systems. Hostility between husband and wife is certainly bad for their health. In another study, Drs. Kiecolt-Glaser and Ronald Glaser focused on couples who had been married for several decades. They found that the immune systems of couples who argued a lot were weaker than those of couples who didn't. A review of dozens of studies has shown that hostility as a personality trait is a major risk factor in the development of coronary heart disease.

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In order to be healthy, we need to live among others. Since social integration is healthful, social skills—the skills that make social integration possible—are utterly relevant to our health. When we are skilled in managing our relationships, we are more likely to build and maintain a network of support. Far from being just a matter of good form, civility is also a matter of good health. Quite simply: being good is good for you. To stay healthy we need to perceive our lives as having purpose and meaning. We usually find purpose and meaning linked to the presence of others in our lives. All the more important, then, that we learn how to treat them fairly, respectfully, and considerately. As we do, it becomes clearer and clearer that civility is the place of encounter between Self and Other where altruism and self-interest find a harmonious way to coexist.

Having relational competence is of great advantage to those of us in the second part of our lives. When we retire we are at risk of finding ourselves isolated. During our working years many people *have* to be around us who would *prefer* not to. But when business is not a factor anymore, those people have no incentive to remain part of our lives. If we are kind and considerate, people will *want* to be around us, and we benefit from enduring circles of attention and care.