

Section 5.01: Activities

Initiating Civility

The CARAWay sessions provide the structure to a civility initiative, but they do not do the whole job. The sessions work as a resource to facilitate the substantial work of improving civility: enhancing the quality of day-to-day social encounters.

CARAWay follows the principles of small gains: modest incremental improvements build on one another to establish a solid foundation for success. Rather than making dramatic changes in throughout every corner of your life, you contribute to improving civility through small acts of kindness and consideration.

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- Note the 4 As of civility:
 - **Acknowledgement:** Saying or doing something that recognizes another person's presence. It could be as simple as smiling or wishing a good morning.
 - **Appreciation:** Expressing thanks for another person's contribution or expressing admiration for the quality of that contribution.
 - **Acceptance:** Explicitly or implicitly welcoming a person into your conversation, group, or project.
 - **Accommodation:** Modifying your activities or space in ways that helps another person participate or to work more comfortably or effectively.

Step 1: Acknowledgement

At the beginning of a work day, write down Acknowledgement as the first focus action. Set a goal of acknowledging four people during your workday. For example, identify people that you do not usually greet during the course of the day. Perhaps you choose a receptionist whom you usually walk by without acknowledging. Perhaps you choose someone in an office on your way to your office. Instead of just walking by, say "Good morning." Then make a check mark by the word, Acknowledgement, to record the event.

CARAWay is serious about the idea of small gains. You can do this without disrupting your life, but it will make a difference in the long run.

Step 2: Appreciation

Appreciation takes the process up a level because it involves (1) attending closely enough to another person's behavior to notice something to appreciate, and (2) saying something appropriate. This sequence requires a bit more of you than saying good morning. It need not be elaborate: "I appreciate you making that point at this morning's meeting," or "Thanks for moving the planning process forward last week." These expressions of appreciation have a broader focus than thanking someone for a favor specifically for you. These appreciations focus on the workgroup's mission. Expressing appreciation for these shared initiatives contributes to the workgroup's culture. Then make a check mark by the word, Appreciation, to record the event.

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Step 3: Acceptance

Acceptance means broadening your circle. Cliques within workgroups act as a drag on the group's capacity. Fragmented social networks have a more difficult time getting traction on tough issues. They lack the resiliency necessary for peak performance. Groups potentially fragment on almost recognizable dimension: occupation, professional identity, managerial level, gender, race, or smoker/nonsmoker. People generally find encounters within their circles to be more comfortable than those that cross the boundaries.

Pursuing acceptance means making contact with workgroup members outside of your usual circles. Acceptance can start easy with a greeting and expand gradually to conversations. Then make a check mark by the word, Acceptance, to record the event.

Step 4: Accommodation

Accommodation goes yet another step towards civility by modifying your routines, space, or resources to help others. That is, you inconvenience yourself a bit to make things more compatible for other people within your workgroup.

Accommodation requires walking a fine balance. Going overboard can undermine your own productivity. Excessive accommodation can generate resentment, especially if your colleague has not yet mastered the appreciation exercises. The workgroup's mission provides the guiding principle for accommodation: develop the work design that enhances the workgroup's capacity for effective action.

Then make a check mark by the word, Accommodation, to record the event.

Enhancement

The major enhancement you could make to this exercise is to go beyond the check mark. Write a few lines that describe the encounter, how the other person responded, and how you felt. Perhaps you felt pleased; perhaps you felt awkward; perhaps you felt resentful.

The enhancement focuses on your experience. That can have a greater impact than doing more civil actions or doing them with greater intensity.