

Wellbeing for the Bush

CIVILITY

Civility is best described as the “rules of engagement” for how people relate to each other. Demonstrating civility means showing regard for those around us and being thoughtful, respectful, courteous, and polite. Civility sounds simple. However, there is more to it than avoiding unwanted or uncivil behaviours. It relies on positive gestures that encourage, inspire, lift up and promote engagement, connectedness and collaboration. It requires authenticity, trust, communication, and, more than anything else, respect.



Why is civility important?



Civility matters in rural and remote health workplaces because collaboration and open communication contribute to high-quality patient care, workforce retention and greater satisfaction and wellbeing of staff. Rural and remote health settings often require you to work closely within a small team. Furthermore, workers may be living and working away from their usual social supports or have limited external social contacts, making a cohesive and collaborative workplace even more critical.



A lack of civility can be a workplace hazard. If left unaddressed, it can spiral into unacceptable or unreasonable behaviours, for example, bullying. Incivility needs to be addressed as soon as possible. As for any other hazard, such as spilt fluids or a tripping risk, teams need to be galvanised into action to minimise the danger to themselves and others.



What does incivility look like?

Research suggests that incivility is of increasing incidence and concern in Australian health workplaces.^{1,2} Incivility is a key antecedent to bullying and may include ostracism, sabotage, infighting, scapegoating and criticism. Uncivil behaviours are characteristically rude and discourteous and display a lack of regard for others.

Examples of incivility can include:

- Failing to acknowledge another person's presence
- Taking credit for others' efforts
- Sabotaging an individual's efforts
- Withholding knowledge or information from others
- Talking down to others
- Withdrawing from open communication or effort
- Spreading rumours about colleagues (gossiping)
- Being discourteous in everyday exchanges, for example, not saying 'please' or 'thank you'.

Incivility costs. It costs individuals by increasing psychological distress, patients by increasing the likelihood of mistakes or inattention, and organisations by increasing absenteeism or staff turnover.

1. Hutchinson, M. (2009) Restorative approaches to workplace bullying: Educating nurses towards shared responsibility. *Contemporary Nurse*, 32, (1-2): 147-155

2. Atashzadeh Shoorideh F, Moosavi S, Balouchi A. (2021) Incivility toward nurses: a systematic review and meta-analysis. *J Med Ethics Hist Med*. 3;14:15.

What can you do?

Behaving civilly in the workplace is everyone's responsibility. Here are a few things you can do to increase civility in the workplace:

- **Be a role model.** Check out our Mindful Monday on modelling the behaviour you want to see.
- **Call out uncivil behaviour.** The behaviours you walk past are the behaviours you accept.
- **Take a bird's eye view of your workplace culture** and contribute to addressing the things that you can.
- **Alert managers to the issues outside your sphere of influence that require attention.** Leaders and managers play an essential role in modelling civil behaviours and intervening early when incivility occurs.
- **Seek help when you need it.** Talk to one of the experienced psychologists on the Bush Support Line, which can help to clarify the issues and identify problem-solving behaviours.

