

SHEDDING LIGHT ON GOOD MANNERS



Centrale des syndicats
du Québec

Good manners—that set of unspoken rules governing our daily interactions—serve as the invisible glue that holds our society together. Greeting a neighbour, giving up your seat to an elderly person, keeping your voice down in a public place... these are all simple gestures that show consideration for others and a sense of community. Yet these social skills now seem to be falling by the wayside. Behaviours that were once taken for granted are steadily dwindling.

When good manners fade away, respect for others is impacted. This shift, which can run from a lack of consideration to disrespectful behaviour, opens the door to incivility. Such behaviour—whether hurtful words, repeated rudeness or a blatant lack of respect—is part of a wider trend affecting public spaces, the digital sphere, workplaces, etc.

While incivility may seem to be on the rise, it is by no means inevitable. In fact, it calls for a collective realization, to prevent such situations and respond appropriately.

It is against this backdrop that the CSQ has decided to focus on this issue. As part of its *Together we see clearly. Let's act against violence* campaign, it sheds light on good manners and behaviours.



RECOGNIZING BAD MANNERS AND INCIVILITY

Good manners encompass all the attitudes, behaviours and unspoken rules that promote respect, civility and well-being in social interactions.

A lack of good manners, on the other hand, is defined as the absence or breach of the rules of civility and respect when interacting with others. It manifests itself in behaviours or attitudes that undermine the dignity or well-being of others, without necessarily being motivated by malicious intent.

A lack of good manners can manifest itself in repeated, sometimes trivialized, uncivil behaviours which nevertheless have tangible repercussions on the dynamic between individuals.

Form of incivility	Example
Verbal	→ Using inappropriate or rude language → Adopting an aggressive tone → Being sarcastic
Non-verbal	→ Deliberately ignoring someone → Behaving inappropriately
Lack of consideration	→ Interrupting someone → Inconsiderately occupying a communal space → Borrowing something without asking → Cutting in front of others in a queue
Disturbing others	→ Talking or laughing at inappropriate times → Making excessive noise

UNDERSTANDING THE IMPACTS

Even when they seem trivial, acts of incivility, just like a lack of good manners, have a tangible impact on individuals and the community or work environment. When repeated, such behaviour undermines relationships and can help create a climate of escalation, leading to more serious situations.



Individual impacts

Incivility and a lack of good manners can impact the well-being of those who are involuntarily involved, and might lead them to:

- experience stress and fatigue;
- develop mistrust and a sense of insecurity;
- experience a loss of self-esteem, concentration and motivation;
- withdraw from others.



Collective impacts

Incivility and a lack of good manners can also have impacts on family and friends, neighbours, communities and work teams, including:

- Deteriorating relationships;
- Undermining group dynamics;
- Creating tensions that may lead to open conflicts, potentially escalating to psychological harassment;
- Normalizing disrespect and increasing tolerance of problematic behaviour;
- Declining concentration, work quality and collaboration within team members.

TAKING ACTION TO FOSTER GOOD MANNERS

To effectively stamp out the lack of good manners, a comprehensive approach is needed, one that involves our institutions, communities and workplaces, but also each and every one of us.

Taking individual action means taking the time to reflect on our own attitudes, behaviours and words in our daily lives. Are we ourselves a source of incivility without even realizing it? Being honest with ourselves is often the first step towards positive change.

Acting collectively means recognizing that we have everything to gain by defining the rules that govern our interactions. Co-creating these rules allows everyone to feel part of the group and fosters greater adherence to shared values. It is also essential that we recognize and encourage positive behaviour when we see it.

What should you do if you witness something?

If you witness incivility or a lack of good manners, it is important to take action, even if the behaviour is not directed at you personally. Your action can help change the course of events.

Here are a few things you can do and some that you should avoid:

	→ Assess the situation before intervening: gauge the severity of the situation and the risks involved. Safety must remain a priority. → Intervene calmly, without confrontation: adopt a calm tone, without seeking to humiliate the person at fault. → Support the person being targeted: address the person experiencing the incivility (a sympathetic look, a word of encouragement, assistance).	→ De-escalate the situation: use neutral phrases to ease tensions, without taking sides. → Call in a third party: seek help from a colleague or a person in authority. Acting as a group provides a better deterrent as well as a greater level of safety.
	→ Remain passive: avoid acting as if you have not seen or heard anything, as indifference sends the message that the behaviour is acceptable. → Respond or act aggressively: an aggressive tone or gesture risks escalating the situation.	→ Ridicule the person at fault: such a reaction may cause the behaviour to escalate. → Downplay what the victim is going through: even seemingly trivial incivility can have a tangible impact on the well-being of the person experiencing it.

How to prevent incivility or a lack of good manners and take action

It is possible to prevent and take action against a lack of good manners and rude behaviour, particularly by strengthening certain protective factors, such as:

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none">→ Promote respect and empathy;→ Recognize and encourage positive and considerate behaviour;→ Develop the social and emotional skills of young people and staff members;→ Establish clear, shared rules; | <ul style="list-style-type: none">→ Create a climate of trust that encourages open communication and swift intervention, where individuals know they can speak out without fear of reprisal;→ Raise awareness of basic manners and social conventions;→ Set an example by showing respect and good manners. |
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Other measures can help prevent such situations and support those impact. Here is a non-exhaustive list of initiatives that could inspire tangible actions in your workplace and community:

- Organize training sessions on good manners and proper behaviour (for example, those offered by the [Institut Pacifique](#) [in French only]);
- Launch awareness-raising campaigns (posters, videos, testimonials, etc.).



USEFUL RESOURCES

Here are some useful resources to help you better understand, prevent or take action against incivility and a lack of good manners:

Bureau du respect de la personne de l'Université de Montréal (respect.umontreal.ca)

A one-stop service (in French only) for anyone at the Université de Montréal affected by harassment, violence, discrimination or racism. Their website provides information and videos on harassment and rude behaviour.

CNESST (cnesst.gouv.qc.ca)

The CNESST (Commission des normes, de l'équité, de la santé et de la sécurité du travail) provides information on various topics including workers' right to earn a living in a harassment-free environment.

Telephone: 1 844 838-0808
Email: [online form](#)

Commission des droits de la personne et des droits de la jeunesse (www.cdcdj.qc.ca/en)

An organization whose mission includes promoting and ensuring compliance with the principles set out in the *Charter of Human Rights and Freedoms*.

Institut Pacifique (institutpacifique.com)

An organization that develops and applies its expertise in conflict resolution and teaching of social skills. It offers a range of training programs (in French only), including some designed for school environments.

Kids Help Phone (kidshelpphone.ca)

An online mental health service for children, teenagers and young adults.

Telephone: 1 800 668-6868
Text: 686868

Tel-jeunes (teljeunes.com/en/)

A free and confidential front-line support service for teenagers and their parents.

Telephone: 1 800 263-2266
Text: 514 600-1002

