



# The Civility Solution: What to Do When People Are Rude

By P. M. Forni

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Many of us find ourselves confronted with rudeness every day and don't know how to respond. From the intrusive cell-phone user who holds loud conversations in public to the hostile highway driver who cuts one off with a quick swerve of his car, politeness seems to be on a downward spiral, surprising us at every turn. P.M. Forni, the author of *Choosing Civility*, has the answer. He knows that rudeness begets rudeness and, in *The Civility Solution*, he shows us what to do when confronted with bad behavior by being assertive as well as civil. In more than one hundred different situations, he shows us how to break the rudeness cycle by responding to a variety of confrontations from bullying to rude internet behavior or the hurtful words of an insensitive family member. How would you respond to the following?

...A salesperson ignores your requests

...A fellow driver gives you the infamous "finger"

...Your child's playmate misbehaves

...Your boss publicly reprimands you

P. M. Forni has solutions for all of these and many more. In yet another simple and practical handbook, P. M. Forni presents logical solutions that reinforce good behavior and make our world a more civil place.

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## The Civility Solution: What to Do When People Are Rude By P. M. Forni Bibliography

- Sales Rank: #459658 in Books
- Published on: 2008-06-10
- Released on: 2008-06-10
- Original language: English
- Number of items: 1
- Dimensions: 8.50" h x .56" w x 5.50" l, .52 pounds
- Binding: Hardcover
- 192 pages

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### Editorial Review

#### Review

It is an honor to recommend this fabulous book! P.M. Forni's thoughtful discussion of the importance of civility in today's hectic world will surely help readers find viable solutions for dealing with a variety of rude situations. (*Peggy Post, director of the Emily Post Institute and author of Emily Post Etiquette, 17th Edition*)

Pier M. Forni will be remembered as one of the greatest generals in our nation's struggle for civility. (*Smithsonian Magazine*)

#### About the Author

DR. P.M. FORNI is an award-winning professor of Italian Literature at Johns Hopkins University. In 2000 he founded The Civility Initiative at Johns Hopkins and over the years has continued to teach courses on the theory and history of manners. His book *Choosing Civility* (2002) has sold more than 100,000 copies. Reports on his work have appeared on The New York Times, The Times of London, The Washington Post, The Wall Street Journal, and The Los Angeles Times. He has been a on a number of radio and television shows, including ABC's World News Tonight, CBS Sunday Morning and BBC's Outlook. For years he was a regular on-the-air contributor to the Baltimore NPR affiliate station and the nationally syndicated radio show The Satellite Sisters.

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Preface If anything characterizes the twenty-first century, it's our inability to restrain ourselves for the benefit of other people.—James Katz This is how Marci recalls the one encounter with rudeness that sticks in her mind: "Needing to run a quick errand before work, I threw on a business suit and ran out the door. Driving north on a wide through street, I climbed a small hill to a stoplight. A man in another car was waiting for me to pass so he could pull out of his subdivision. I did pass and then stopped at the red light a few yards up to make a left turn. The man pulled up alongside me to turn right at the light and leaned out of his window. The nasty expletive exploded from his lips. It was pure spite delivered with shocking bluntness. At least the kids weren't in the car to hear him. Shaken, I began to tremble—not with anger but with the sting of an unexpected wound. "Why me? Why such an extreme reaction? Didn't he see I was just a working mom, driving my minivan to work? I wasn't ignorant or inconsiderate, selfish or dim-witted, and I certainly was not what he called me! The unfairness of it all hit me. Should I follow this man and at the first opportunity demand an explanation? Maybe offer an apology? No, better to do my errand and get to work. I began to cry. "I felt so abused, so punished, so violated, so deeply hurt, and eventually very angry that I could not defend myself. The incident affected me for days afterward. The next time I climbed that hill to the stoplight, I looked around to see what I might have done to cause the outburst. Eventually, after a long time, I realized it was more the man's problem than mine." Marci's tale is unusual only because she never did find out what caused the stranger's outburst. Her emotions, however, are quite familiar. All of us have been shocked by people behaving rudely. Rude relatives, bosses, co-workers, "fellow" drivers, and strangers in literally all circumstances of life have made us feel at fault, helpless, and angry. We have bristled at the unfairness of their attacks and at times endured lingering hurt. Clearly a problem in the lives of individuals (with negative

effects not only for its victims but also for its perpetrators), rudeness is also a social problem with costs estimated in the billions of dollars. Rudeness may be everybody's everyday problem, but millions remain unprepared for their encounters with it. This book aims to help you find exactly what rudeness is and how it works. Most important, you will learn how to defend yourself effectively and civilly from its daily challenges. Being civil is the sterling strategy for rudeness prevention. If you are respectful and considerate, most of the people with whom you come in contact will be motivated to be the same in return. When rudeness can't be prevented, civility is still your best choice, as the stories that follow show over and over again. Although we cannot hope to ban rudeness from our lives altogether, we can limit both its occurrences and its impact. When we handle it well, we feel good about ourselves and reap other substantial benefits, such as healing wounded relationships. Being prepared is half the solution to any problem. Put this book to work for you, and never let rudeness catch you unprepared again. Precisely because rudeness is quite common, it is not a

trivial issue. Indeed, in our day-to-day lives it is possibly

responsible for more pain than any other mortal failing.—Emrys Westacott Our ability to deal with rudeness is somehow related to

how we handle grief, and the series of steps that we go through in coping: shock, denial, anger, acceptance, and finally release. Of course the narrative for a loss occurs over a protracted period of time, while the rude encounter's narrative is far shorter.—James Bailey

1. On Rudeness Eight tough weeks into my stint as a reluctant conscript in the Italian Army, I was not looking forward to another ten months in the stark isolation of my remote Alpine outpost. I knew I would miss civilian freedom and the excitement of city life. Newly licensed to drive military trucks, I could see in my future only long and bleary-eyed shifts steering diesel behemoths along treacherous mountain roads. Then, one cold December morning, everything changed. Transfer orders came, like an extravagant early Christmas gift. I was to report to brigade's headquarters that very evening. My C.O. informed me that I would be in charge of a new military newsletter and act as liaison with the local press. The brigade was headquartered south of the mountains in a lovely town graced by elegant Renaissance buildings, filled with art treasures, and swarming with life. Congenial work awaited me. Relative freedom came with the job. I felt as though I was rejoining civilization, and I was moved by my own good fortune. Still incredulous, I packed my few belongings, put on my travel uniform, and arranged a ride to the train station. As the train pulled away from the frozen wilderness, my heart soared. The sky had loomed overcast since morning, but as we left the last of the shaded gorges and uncoiled onto the flatland, the afternoon sunshine made its glorious appearance. While the golden light raced us down the rust-colored countryside, I became sharply aware of a rush of happiness inside me. I was simply, perfectly happy. And with that happiness came the determination to always remember how it felt. There was no assurance that I would ever experience it again. I wanted to remember the electrical warmth of the train compartment, the smell of the vinyl upholstery, the preternatural quality of the light, the surge inside. Moments like this make life worth living. They are rare and usually come out of the blue. We are visited by them just as the ancients were visited by their gods. This does not mean, however, that in the realm of the ordinary there is no room for happiness. It may be a happiness of a different kind, but it too makes our days worth living. When you are asked if you had a good day, what allows you to answer that you did? Not that you experienced rapturous joy but rather that a few defining—albeit mundane—good things happened to you. You may think, for instance: "I really got a lot done at work today. The office finally came together as a team, without the usual power games and personality clashes. The Big Boss even acknowledged that my marketing plan was very smart. Is a promotion next? Salad with Jennifer at lunch was a treat. We must do that more often. She took it in stride that I had to remain at work late again tonight and said she would be glad to pick up the children at school. I will make it up to her. I am so lucky to have her in my life. The drive home was no struggle, for a change. No tailgating, no angry honking, no wild lane hopping. People were in a wonderful merge-and-let-merge

mood. No stress there; in fact, some friendly waving. Wouldn't it be wonderful if it was always like that?" You may not have experienced a single "brilliant flash of enjoyment" (to use John Stuart Mill's expression), but you are happy with what you did, happy with your day. You feel good about yourself and about the world. This ordinary happiness, this feeling of contentment can become your faithful companion. It's the state of mind you refer to when you say that you are happy with your life. What you mean is that you are gratified by a number of good things that are part of your daily experience. How is life treating you? That depends to a large extent on how others are treating you and how you are treating them. In the preceding example, the events forming the good day all involved people relating positively to one another. Unfortunately, as a society we seem to be failing the respect-and-consideration test. Opinion surveys have been reporting for years that Americans are quite concerned about the incivility they encounter every day. They feel they have been witnessing a steady decline of standards in their lifetimes and see no realistic indication that a trend reversal is around the corner. A detailed picture of incivility in the U.S. today will emerge from the following pages and chapters. Suffice it to say, for now, that the threat of incivility to the quality of our lives is not a trivial one. Common sense suggests that we should learn to cope as best we can with the rudeness that will certainly keep coming our way. To do that we need to acquire clear notions of what rudeness is, what it does, and what causes it. WHAT IS RUDENESS? As a Courtesy to the

Next Passenger May

We Suggest You Use

Your Towel to Wipe

Off The Washbasin Have you ever noticed this kind of sign in an airplane restroom? I find it truly extraordinary. It is the voice of society reminding us that we are expected to care for one another. We are expected, mind you, not required. The sign makes no reference to a law or even a regulation. The key words are "as a courtesy" and "we suggest"—nothing more than a gentle prodding. But why should we clean out a basin that a perfect stranger will use next? Why spend time and energy on something that does not benefit us directly? Because it is the right thing to do. Being courteous to the next passenger is its own reward, the sole incentive. A remarkable notion! Several decades ago, Sir John Fletcher Moulton, a distinguished British judge, spoke of a sphere of human action he called Obedience to the Unenforceable. Actions in this realm are neither prescribed by law nor chosen in absolute freedom. Rather, they are influenced by our sense of what is the proper, responsible, and decent thing to do. They fall under an unofficial code of duty to goodness. If we fail to yield our subway seat to a frail and aging fellow passenger, the law will not come after us. And yet, something makes us forgo our comfort. We are free to remain seated, yet we are not completely free. Civility compels us—at least some of us—to stand. When we obey the Unenforceable and clean up after ourselves...

## **Users Review**

### **From reader reviews:**

#### **Katherine Anderson:**

Book is to be different for each and every grade. Book for children right up until adult are different content. As it is known to us that book is very important usually. The book *The Civility Solution: What to Do When People Are Rude* ended up being making you to know about other information and of course you can take more information. It is quite advantages for you. The guide *The Civility Solution: What to Do When People Are Rude* is not only giving you a lot more new information but also for being your friend when you sense bored. You can spend your own spend time to read your publication. Try to make relationship together with the book *The Civility Solution: What to Do When People Are Rude*. You never feel lose out for everything should you read some books.

**Sylvia Dozier:**

Do you among people who can't read satisfying if the sentence chained within the straightway, hold on guys this aren't like that. This The Civility Solution: What to Do When People Are Rude book is readable by means of you who hate those perfect word style. You will find the facts here are arrange for enjoyable reading experience without leaving actually decrease the knowledge that want to provide to you. The writer associated with The Civility Solution: What to Do When People Are Rude content conveys thinking easily to understand by many people. The printed and e-book are not different in the articles but it just different by means of it. So , do you continue to thinking The Civility Solution: What to Do When People Are Rude is not loveable to be your top listing reading book?

**Lesley Dwyer:**

Are you kind of stressful person, only have 10 or maybe 15 minute in your time to upgrading your mind proficiency or thinking skill even analytical thinking? Then you are having problem with the book than can satisfy your short space of time to read it because pretty much everything time you only find book that need more time to be go through. The Civility Solution: What to Do When People Are Rude can be your answer as it can be read by anyone who have those short time problems.

**Andrew Blanton:**

That reserve can make you to feel relax. This book The Civility Solution: What to Do When People Are Rude was colorful and of course has pictures around. As we know that book The Civility Solution: What to Do When People Are Rude has many kinds or style. Start from kids until young adults. For example Naruto or Investigation company Conan you can read and feel that you are the character on there. Therefore , not at all of book usually are make you bored, any it offers up you feel happy, fun and unwind. Try to choose the best book to suit your needs and try to like reading which.

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