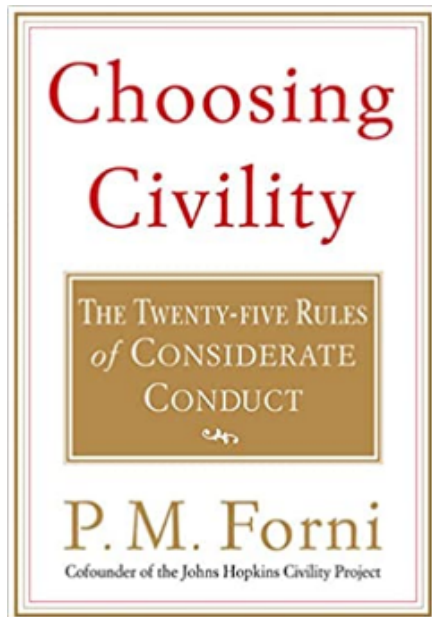


Choosing Civility: The Twenty-five Rules of Considerate Conduct

Maureen Murphy, President of the League of Wisconsin Municipalities

Twenty-five years ago, PM Forni wrote a magical, self-help book titled, *Choosing Civility: The Twenty-five Rules of Considerate Conduct*. In the book, Forni defines civility as the art of cultivating respectful relationships with the purpose of being good community members. He posits that life is better when we are thoughtful and respectful with each other. Forni treats kindness and consideration in relationships as art forms that can be learned, taught, and perfected.



Here are the 25 rules:

1. **Pay Attention** – Only after we notice the world, can we begin to care for it.
2. **Acknowledge Others** – Say hello to everyone. Avoid treating anyone as invisible.
3. **Think the Best** – Most people are doing the best that they can in the circumstances they're in.
4. **Listen** – You have two ears and one mouth so that you listen twice as much as you speak.
5. **Be Inclusive** – Push past your boundaries; expand your experiences.
6. **Speak Kindly** – Kind words are never, ever wasted.

New Hampshire

Town and City -

March/April 2023

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7. **Don't Speak Ill** – When you speak unkindly about people, it says more about you than others.
8. **Accept and Give Praise** – Give praise and receive praise; both matter.
9. **Respect Even a Subtle “No”** – Honor other people's boundaries.
10. **Respect Others' Opinions** – Honor other people's opinions, especially in the midst of a disagreement.
11. **Mind Your Body** – Appearing our best should be the goal.
12. **Be Agreeable** - Look for opportunities to agree. Don't contradict just to do so.
13. **Keep it Down** – Noise is pervasive and frustrating.
14. **Respect Other People's Time** – Arriving on time is a basic rule of considerate behavior.
15. **Respect Other People's Space** – Respect that personal space is important.
16. **Apologize Earnestly** – Be sincere and repair damaged relationships.
17. **Assert Yourself** – Learn to say no when you need to say no.
18. **Avoid Personal Questions** – People are entitled to their privacy.
19. **Care for Your Guests** – Commit yourself to your guest's comfort.
20. **Be a Considerate Guest** – Commit yourself to being a good guest.
21. **Think Twice Before Asking for Favors** – Try to solve your problems yourself.
22. **Refrain from Idle Complaints** – Let go of unproductive complaining.
23. **Give Constructive Criticism** – When disagreeing, stick to the issues and don't make it personal.
24. **Respect the Environment and Be Gentle to Animals** – Defend what can't defend itself.
25. **Don't Shift Responsibility and Blame** – Own it.

Remember that this book was written many years ago so if you do read it, you will find that it contains some beliefs that worked a quarter century ago that may not be entirely relevant today. Although, the core 25 principles are still remarkably useful and meaningful.

Source: *The Municipality*, January 2023, Maureen Murphy, President of the League of Wisconsin Municipalities.

best practices

Article Topics: **elected officials**



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