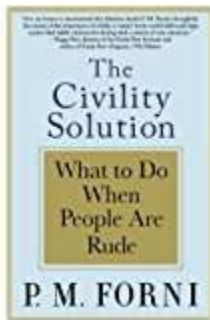




## CIVILITY CENTER BOOK REVIEW



### **The Civility Solution- What to Do When People Are Rude**

[https://www.amazon.com/s/ref=nb\\_sb\\_noss?url=search-alias%3Daps&field-keywords=the+civility+solution](https://www.amazon.com/s/ref=nb_sb_noss?url=search-alias%3Daps&field-keywords=the+civility+solution)

The success of Forni's first book, Choosing Civility: The Twenty-five Rules of Considerate Conduct, (which the Institute reviewed in 2005) points to the hunger that exists within our society for positive guidance on everyday interactions. But as most people know, and as we ourselves acknowledge, it can be a challenge to remain civil and polite with people who exhibit no desire to be civil in return. The Civility Solution is P.M. Forni's response to that very dilemma.

The book is divided into two parts. Part One: Wisdom and Skills, examines what rudeness is, as well as some of its causes. Forni states that "rudeness is disregard. It diminishes and demeans." and that "rudeness is control through invalidation." (p. 7) Forni goes on to discuss how rudeness adds to stress, erodes self-esteem, is bad for all kinds of relationships, poisons the workplace, and escalates into violence.

The author then goes on to offer eight rules for a civil life, and discusses the importance of each in turn. These rules all sound simple enough, but are things that each of us probably needs to be

reminded of at least occasionally. Perhaps the first rule – Slow Down and be Present in Your Life – is as good an example as any. As Forni points out, “kindness requires time and we don’t have it.” (p.30)

The other rules include listen to the voice of empathy, keep a positive attitude, respect others and grant them plenty of validation, disagree graciously and refrain from arguing, get to know the people around you, pay attention to the small things, and ask, don’t tell.

Equipped with these rules, Forni goes on to suggest strategies for dealing with everything from impersonal, unintentional rudeness to bullying (which he describes as sustained rudeness) in homes, schools, and the workplace. Of everything he says, perhaps the most helpful advice he offers is the reminder to remember that the rudeness we receive “is not about you.” He quotes F. Scott Fitzgerald, who observed, “It’s not a slam at you when people are rude-it’s a slam at the people they’ve met before.” (p. 70)

Part Two of the book offers Forni’s brief suggestions for dealing with rudeness in specific situations. This section examines situations ranging from relationships with our spouses, family, and friends to digital communication, and is perhaps less something to read through than to refer to if you find yourself in need of a little encouragement.

In closing, Forni provides a brief summary of strategies to use in the face of rudeness, and provides us with a final thought: “Apologies and forgiveness are the lifesavers of relationships...Use them unsparingly as you go through the wonderful and difficult experience in relating and connecting that we call life.” (p. 160)

**About the Author:** P.M. Forni is the founder of the Civility Initiative at Johns Hopkins University.

**The Civility Solution** is published by St. Martin’s Press, New York, London, 2008.

Review completed by the team at The Institute for Civility [www.instituteforcivility.org](http://www.instituteforcivility.org)