

# Better Together: Five Fundamentals of Civility for Physicians

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# Learning Objectives:

- List some definitions of civility that are relevant to the behaviour and well-being of workers in the healthcare environment;
- Identify a grouping of strategies that promote professional civility and which can be integrated into all levels of professional training and practice.
- Appreciate ways that civility can have a positive impact upon workplace culture and the culture of medicine.

# Disclosure

Faculty: Dr. Michael Kaufmann

Role: Medical Director, Physician Health Program, Ontario  
Medical Association

Dr. Kaufmann has no commercial interests or conflicts of  
interest to disclose

# The Physician Health Program

Over 8000 health professionals  
have been served since 1995

“If you build it...they will come.”

# PHP callers are ...

exhausted and burned out

**ANXIOUS**

depressed

Disillusioned

discouraged



*crossing boundaries*

isolated

financially stressed

stressed by marital  
or family problems

caught <sup>in</sup> conflicts



**angry**

victims of harassment and violence

considering suicide



experiencing a serious mental illness 

*abusing or dependent on alcohol or drugs*

**stressed at work**

**Disrupting**

*optimal*  
work conditions

# What does incivility look like?



# Everyday Incivility

- Skipped “Hello.”
- Talking over, talking down
- Eye rolling or other demeaning gestures
- Rude use of technology
- Gossip
- Calling someone out, blaming publicly or in meetings
- Social exclusion
- Profanity, offensive jokes
- Minor boundary intrusions – sounds, aromas

# Impacts of incivility:

(Leiter, M; Analyzing and Theorizing the Dynamics of the Workplace Incivility Crisis)

- Worker stress, distress, burnout, illness
- Decreased productivity, absenteeism, presenteeism
- Propagation of unwanted behaviour
- Decline in workplace morale
- Increased worker turnover and cost to the organization
- Cultural “Code of Incivility”
- Patient safety?



# What are some definitions of civility?



**Civility:** (Spath and Dahnke; Institute for Civility in Government)

*“Civility is about more than just politeness, although politeness is a necessary first step. It is about disagreeing without disrespect, seeking common ground as a starting point for dialogue about differences, listening past one’s preconceptions, and teaching others to do the same. Civility is the hard work of staying present even with those with whom we have deep-rooted and fierce disagreements.”*

# Civility

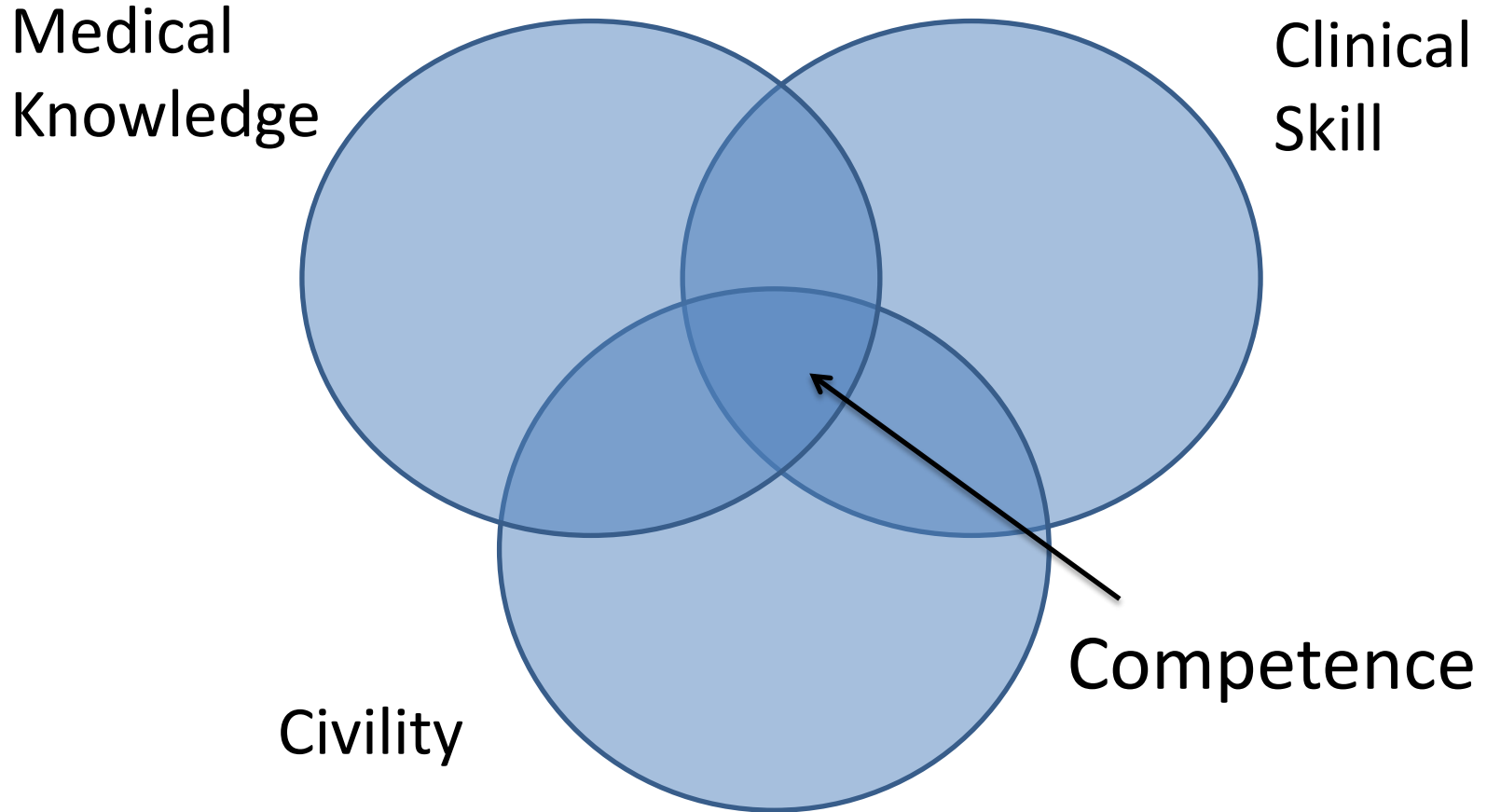
*“It is political in the sense that it is a necessary prerequisite for civic action. But it is political, too, in the sense that it is about negotiating interpersonal power such that everyone’s voice is heard, and nobody’s is ignored.”*

*“Civility is claiming and caring for one’s identity, needs and beliefs without degrading someone else’s in the process.”*

# Civility: (Davetian, B; Civility: A Cultural History)

*“...the extent to which citizens of a given culture speak and act in ways that demonstrate a caring for the welfare of others as well as the welfare of the culture they share in common.”*

# The Competent Professional



Adapted from Brian Hodges MD

# So why civility?

- Positive inference
- Palatable, acceptable
- Desirable with respect to professional effectiveness and satisfaction
- Enables many physician health / collegial conversations
- Positive cultural shift

# Choosing Civility

THE TWENTY-FIVE RULES  
*of* CONSIDERATE  
CONDUCT



"One of those rare gems... this book is about how we ought to treat each other.  
What could be more important than that?"

—EDWARD HALLOWELL, M.D., author of  
*Connect and The Childhood Roots of Adult Happiness*

P. M. Forni

Cofounder of the Johns Hopkins Civility Project

# Five Fundamentals Of Civility

1

## Respect Others and Yourself

Treat everyone in the workplace, regardless of role, with respect — even those we barely know, disagree with, or dislike. Respect for others requires inclusivity while observing healthy boundaries. Self-respect is key.

2

## Be Aware

Civility is a deliberate endeavour, requiring conscious awareness of oneself and others. Mindfulness and reflective practice enhance awareness.

3

## Communicate Effectively

Civil communication is more about how we say it as much as what we say. Or do. Effective communication is critical at times of tension or when the stakes are high.

4

## Take Good Care of Yourself

It's hard to be civil when personally stressed, distressed, or ill.

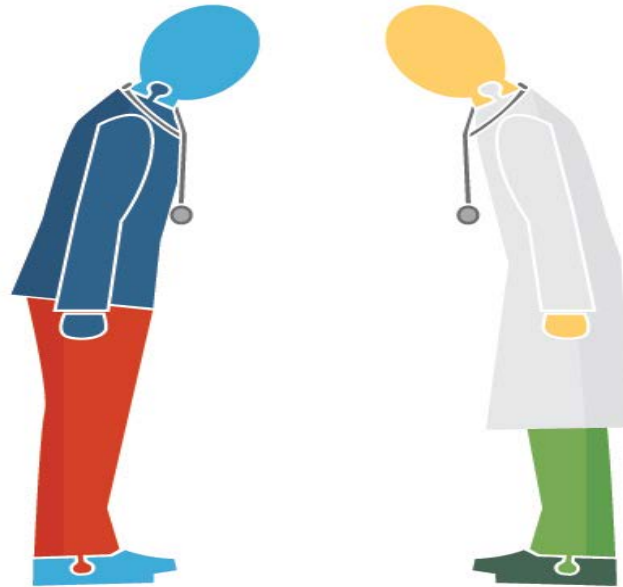
5

## Be Responsible

Understand and accept personal accountability. Avoid shifting blame for uncivil behavioural choices. Intervene when it's the right thing to do.



# #1: Respect Others and Yourself



“Respect is like air. As long as it’s present, nobody thinks about it.  
But if you take it away, it’s all that people can think about.”

Crucial Conversations

# Respect

- For those we know and like
- For those we don't know
- For those we don't agree with
- For those who have hurt us?
- ***Self***
- ***Culture of medicine***

# Bank of Social Capital



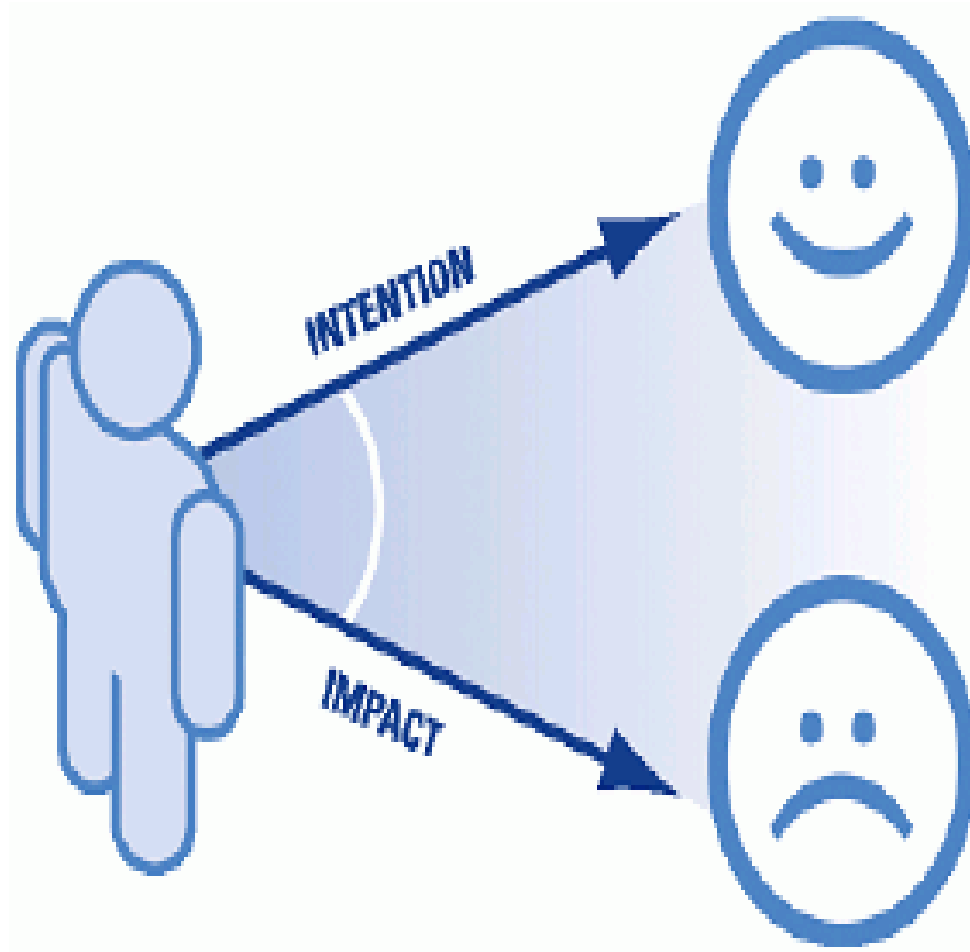
## #2: Be Aware



“We don’t see things as they are,  
we see things as we are.”

Anais Nin

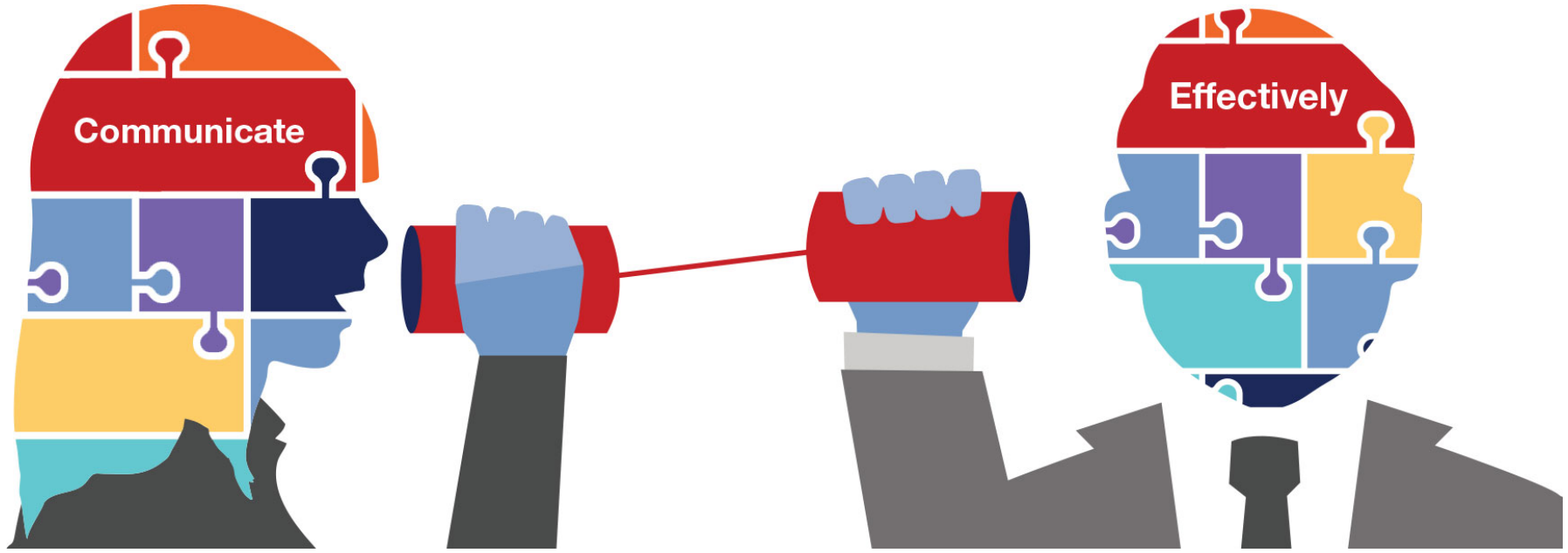
# Awareness Gap



# Enhancing self-awareness and reflection

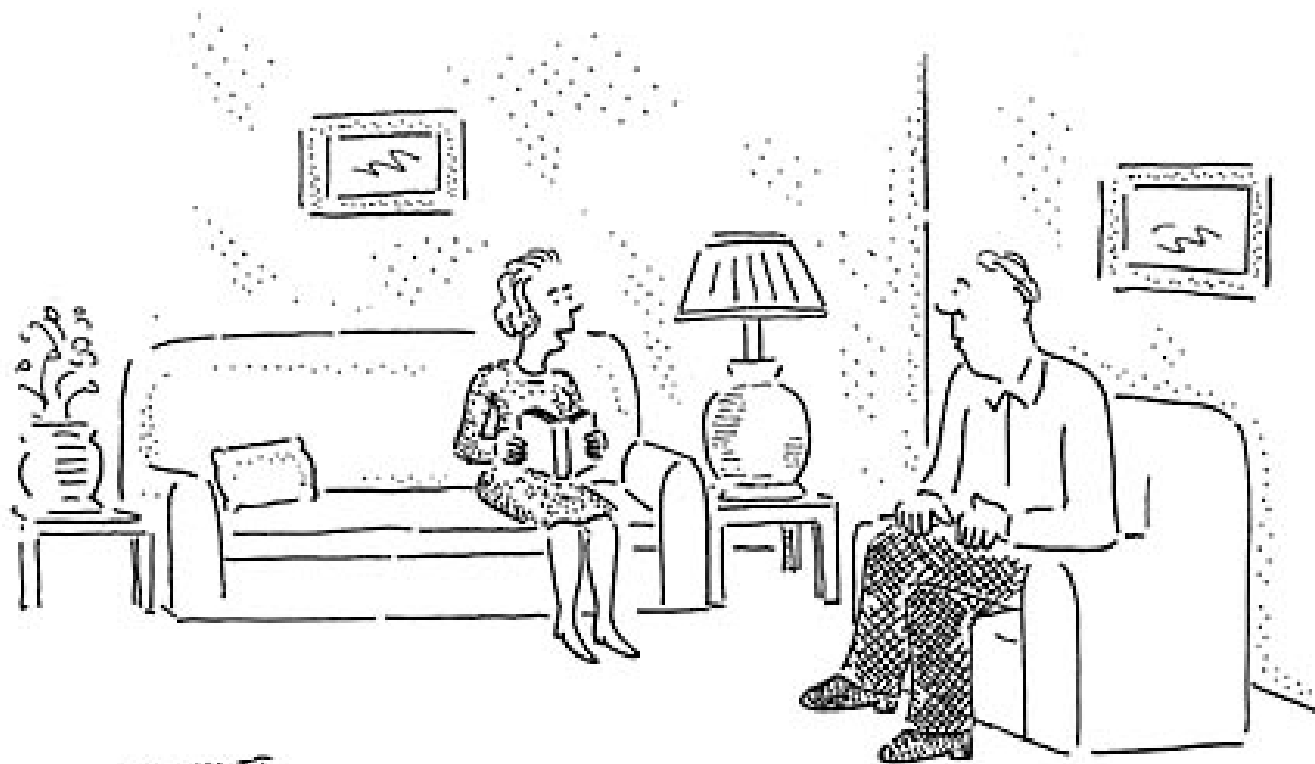
- Keep a reflective journal
- Mentorship
- Group / team discussion
- Seek effective feedback
- Mindfulness

# #3: Communicate Effectively



“The single biggest problem in communication is the illusion that it has taken place.”

George Bernard Shaw



MANKOFF

*“I’m sorry, dear. I wasn’t listening. Could you repeat what you’ve said since we’ve been married?”*



# Two kinds of silence:

- Good: Listening
- Not so good: Withholding important feedback



# Active Listening

- Plan listening
- Eye contact
- Receptive body language
- Take plenty of time
- Be curious
- Resist planning your own script



# “Empathy Immersion”

1. Suspend old habits of judgement
2. See issues through the eyes of the other stakeholders
3. Learn to “Let go” and “Let come.”

From “I’m Right and You’re an Idiot,” James Hoggan

# Civil Conversation Blockers

“You...”

“You always...”

“You never...”

“Don’t take this personally,  
but...”

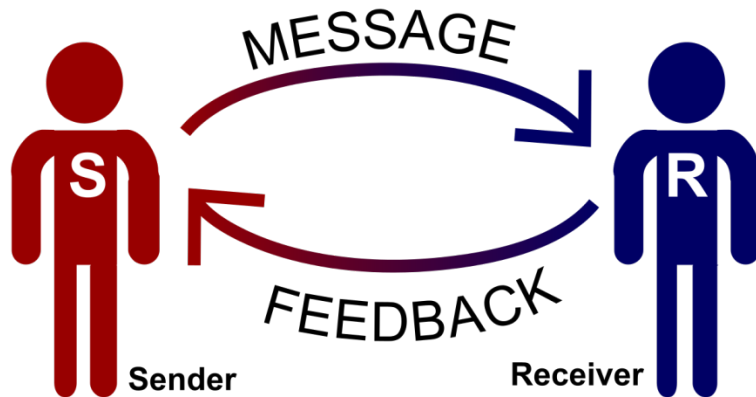
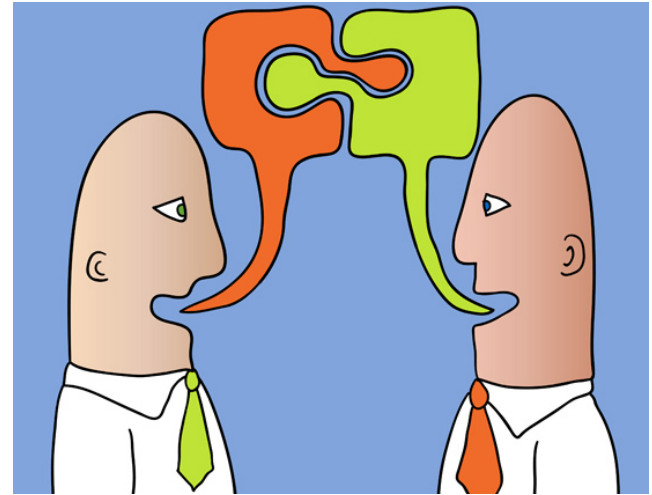
“With all due respect...”

“What were you thinking??”



# Constructive Conversation

- Positive, planned, safe
- Mutual motivation, goals
- DESC assertiveness



- Clarify, check
- Leave the other feeling OK
- Don't forget praise!

# Should we communicate civilly with everyone?



# **ABC** for tense moments:

**A** for **Aware**

**B** for **Breathe**

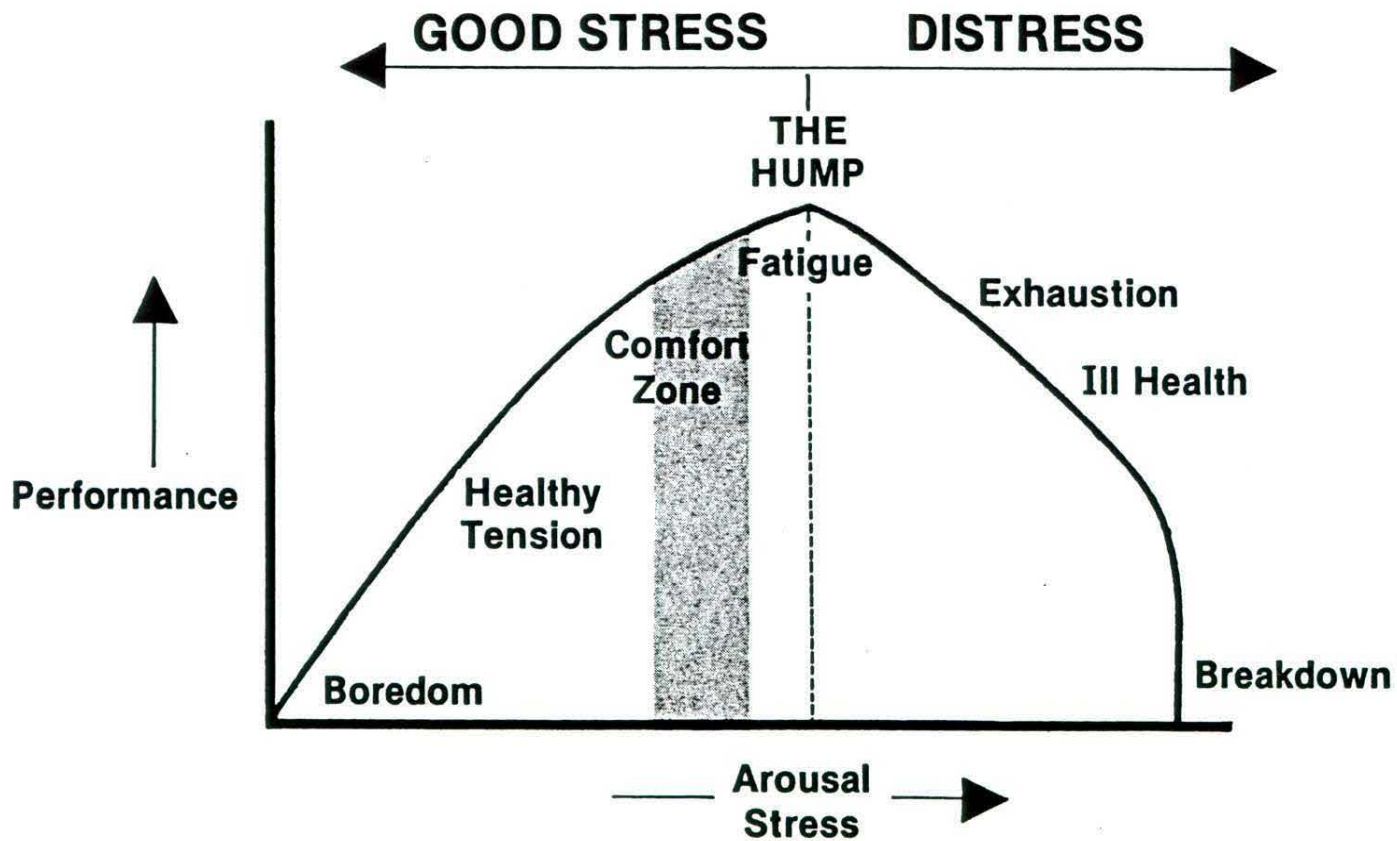
**C** for **Choose Civil Communication**

# #4: Take Good Care of Yourself

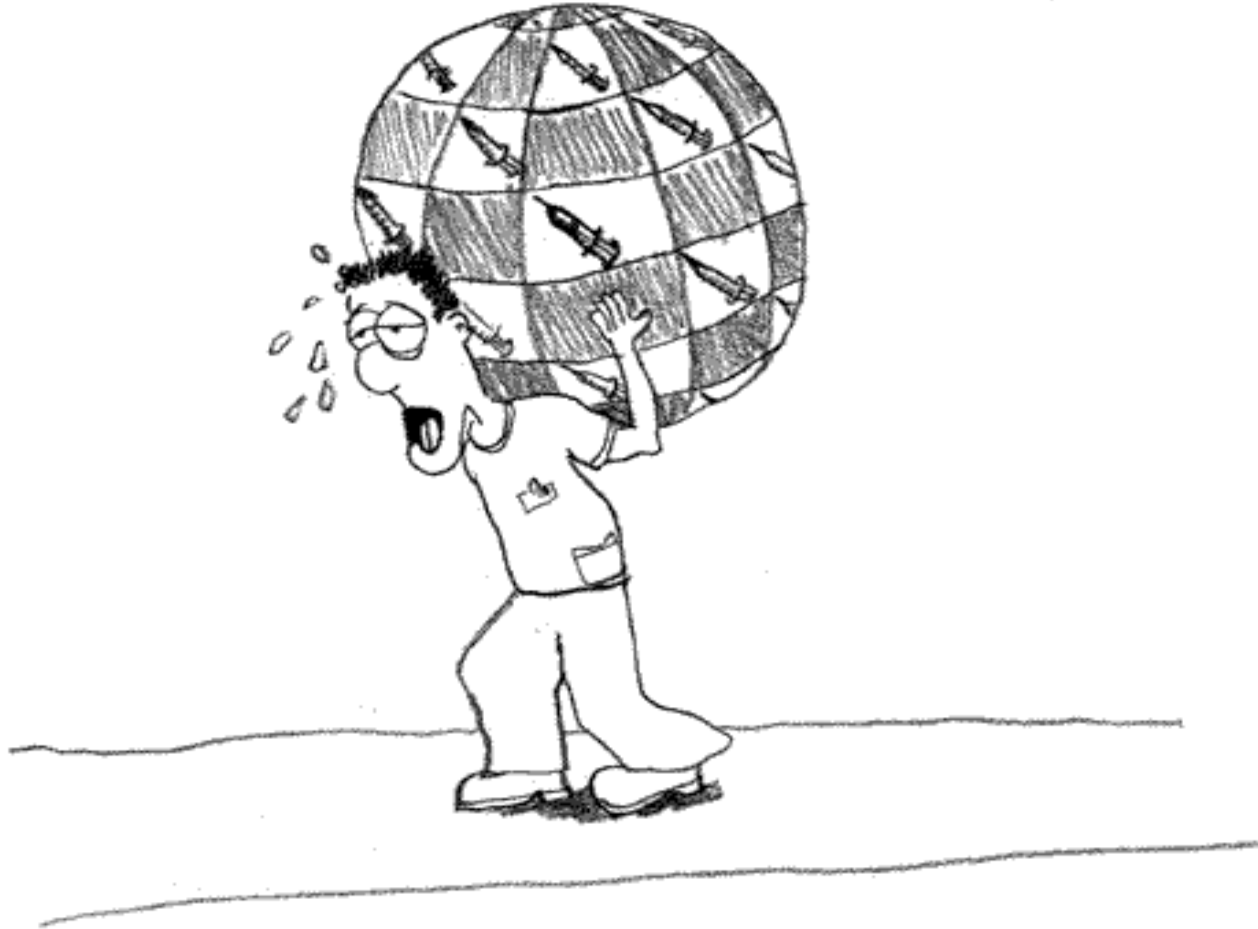




# Human Function Curve



**What happens if we can't put the load down?**



***Burnout!***

# THE BASICS



Strategies for coping with stress  
and building personal resilience for physicians

# #5 Be Responsible

“Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world. Indeed, it is the only thing that ever has.”

Margaret Mead



# Culture of Medicine



Swimming with sharks...



# Swimming with the sharks:

- Any unidentified colleague is a shark until proven otherwise.
- Be sure not to bleed: it attracts sharks.
- Get out of the water if another is bleeding.
- Counter aggression with more aggression.

Krizek TJ; Surgery...Is it an Impairing Profession?

J Am Coll Surg; 2002 Mar; 194(3): 352-66

**“In and through community lies the  
salvation of the world.”**



M. Scott Peck  
“The Different Drum”



<https://www.ruok.org.au/how-to-ask>

- Ask
- Listen
- Encourage
- Follow-up



# Cultural “memes” to consider:

- Self-sacrifice is necessary for success.
- Superior knowledge and ability “forgives” incivility.
- I learned this way...you must do the same.
- This is the way we have always done things here
- Many others...

# Fix “Broken Windows”

Sharone Bar-David: “Trust Your Canary”

- Create clear Codes of Conduct
- Embed civility values into leadership practices
- Resist bystander mode
- Address instances of incivility early and promptly
- Honour the culture(s) to which you belong



# Culture of Civility



***Civility is contagious!***

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The screenshot shows the homepage of the OMA Physician Health Program. At the top, the OMA logo is on the left and the Professionals Health Program logo is on the right. Below the logo is a navigation bar with links for HOME, ABOUT PHP, LINKS, CONTACT US, and SEARCH. The main content area features four large icons: 'E EDUCATION SERVICES' with the text 'Educational Presentations' below it; a graphic of two hands shaking with five colored cards (integrity, respect, compassion, honesty, responsibility) with the text 'The Five Fundamentals of Civility for Physicians' below it; a stick figure icon with the text 'The Basics series' below it; and a book icon with the text 'Guides & Articles' below it. Below these are eight smaller icons: 'Need Help Now' (a person on a phone), 'Who We Serve' (a group of people), 'Monitors & Labsites' (a person at a computer), '2014 New CME Educational Programs' (a blue box), 'CPHI Best Practices in Physician Health' (a blue box), 'JOIN US for the 2014 PHP Annual Meeting' (a blue box), 'Physician Workplace Support Program' (a blue box), 'ePhysicianHealth' (a person at a computer), 'Wellness Centre' (a blue box), and 'Events & Newsletters' (a blue box). At the bottom, there are logos for CVO, OVMMA (Ontario Veterinary Medical Association), OMA (Ontario Medical Association), and the Ontario Pharmacists Association.