



Connect with Kids

# Civil Wars

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# Civil Wars Fact Sheet



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The following statistics relate to civility issues today:

- A recent survey found that 70 percent of adults think that teens are “rude, irresponsible and wild” and lack values, character and basic civility. Moreover, less than 15 percent of the adults said it is typical to find youth who are friendly and helpful to their neighbors.
- A poll conducted by the National Association of Secondary School Principals found that 89 percent of grade school teachers and principals reported that they “regularly” face abusive language from students.
- Twin surveys conducted by Zogby International in 1999 reveal that six in 10 teachers consider profanity, defiance of authority and disrespect to be more frequent – and more serious – problems today than five years ago.
- A *U.S. News & World Report Civility in America* study found that more than eight in 10 adults – both with and without kids – agree that bad parenting is the major cause of bad manners.
- The “Workplace Incivility: The Target’s Eye View” study found that 78 percent said incivility on the job has worsened in the last 10 years. The study, conducted by the Marlin Co. and Yale School of Management, also found that men are seven times more likely to be rude or insensitive to underlings than to superiors, and women are equally rude to both superiors and subordinates.
- A *USA Today* Gallup poll shows that three out of four Americans (78 percent) think rude and selfish behavior is worse at airports and highways.
- In a five-year workplace study from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, more than half surveyed said they were distracted by rude behavior at work and got less done while fuming about it.
- The Texas A&M University Center for Retailing Studies reports that lack of customer respect is the root of every common service complaint.
- In 2000, the University of South Carolina’s Center for Child and Family Studies evaluated its state’s four-year character education initiative. Based on surveys of administrators, researchers found that 91 percent reported improvement in student attitudes, 89 percent reported improvement in student behavior, 60 percent reported improvement in academic performance and more than 65 percent reported improved teacher and staff attitudes.
- A 1998 survey of 356 high school teachers, published in the *American School Board Journal*, found that nine out of 10 teachers say that cheating is a problem, and half say that they encounter students cheating in most of their classes. According to teachers, this is because of an “erosion of ethics in a self-centered culture.”
- The Josephson Institute of Ethics reports that almost three out of four (71 percent) students said they cheated in the previous year, and 35 percent of students surveyed had stolen something from a store.
- A recent national survey conducted by the Josephson Institute of Ethics found 43 percent of high school and 37 percent of middle school boys believe it is OK to hit or threaten a person who makes them angry. Nearly one in five (19%) of the girls agree.
- The National Institute of Child Health & Human Development funded an independent study that gathered data from more than 15,000 middle and high school students in the United States. About one in every three students reported moderate or frequent involvement in bullying behaviors, with 13 percent involved in bullying other students, 11 percent as the targets of these behaviors and 6 percent involved at different times in both of these roles.
- The U.S. Departments of Education and Justice report that one in every 10 students is threatened or injured with a weapon at school each year. One out of every 10 middle school students has been bullied at school during the last six months. One in every eight students was the target of hate-related words in the previous six months. One in every three students saw hate-related graffiti at school in the previous six months.

## RESOURCES

Josephson Institute of Ethics National Association of Secondary School Principals  
National Institute of Child Health & Human Development  
National Parent Information Network Public Agenda Texas A&M University Center for Retailing  
Studies American School Board Journal University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill  
University of South and Family Studies  
Carolina's Center for Child  
USA Today U.S. Department of U.S. Department of U.S. News & World Yale School of  
Management Zogby International

# Civil Wars Parent Tip Sheet



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Every generation boasts its fair share of teens who cheat, curse, fight, harass, vandalize or behave in other disrespectful ways. “Gangs...violence...carjackings...muggings – and they’re children. A lot of them are children,” says Kathy Shields, a teacher.

But do today’s teens make up the most uncivil generation to date? Some parents and educators believe they do. In fact, *Kids These Days '99: What Americans Really Think about the Next Generation* found that 70 percent of adults surveyed think that teens are “rude, irresponsible and wild” and lack values, character and basic civility.

“Kids are not as civil as when we were growing up and going to school,” says Lynn DiTizio, a mother.

“[My parents] just say that I’m not considerate toward their feelings and I only think about myself and I’m selfish and I’m self-centered,” says Ashley Radcliff, 13. “I mean, I’m supposed to be. I’m a teenager.”

And findings from the *Sizing Things Up: What Parents, Teachers and Students Think about Large and Small High Schools* survey show that even some youth are turned off by the uncivil behavior of their classmates. Consider these additional statistics from the survey of 1,008 teens nationally, which was conducted by the research organization Public Agenda:

- Majorities of teens (64 percent in large schools, 55 percent in small schools) said their school has a serious problem with too many students who abuse drugs and alcohol.
- More than three in four (81 percent in large schools, 76 percent in small schools) said they hear frequent cursing in the hallways and cafeteria.

About one-third (34 percent in large schools, 32 percent in small schools) said their school has a serious problem with bullying.

- Nearly half (46 percent) of students attending large schools said they see serious fights at least once a month in their school, and a third (34 percent) of students in small schools also report fighting.
- About four in 10 students (42 percent in large schools, 43 percent in small schools) said their school has problems with too many students cheating on tests and with too many of their classmates getting away without doing their homework (43 percent in large schools, 37 percent in small schools).
- About a third of students (31 percent in large schools, 35 percent in small schools) said their classmates treat each other with respect; for teachers, the results are more grim – only 22 percent of small school and 16 percent of large school students believe most of their classmates treat teachers with respect.

## WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

Many experts agree that today's fast-paced world is an ideal breeding ground for incivility. Every day, teens watch sitcoms in which children backtalk their parents, play video games that encourage violent behavior, visit websites that promote pirating music via the Internet, and even witness adults succumb to road rage.

"We're in a culture that celebrates the fast break and the quick climb," says Dr. James Fowler, a psychologist and ethicist. "A lot of incivility comes when we're blowing the horn at somebody who's driving in a peaceful way when we're in a great rush. And that's just the kind of model of what a lot of our incivility is about – 'Get out of my way! I'm going forward!'"

Therefore, it is important that you establish your family's values, which will give meaning and direction to your child's life. In fact, the values you teach your child today will have a lifelong impact, particularly in the following areas:

- What he or she does in his or her spare time
- How he or she spends his or her money
- What he or she wears and eats
- How he or she relates to others

In order to establish positive values in your child, you must first explain what it means to be a "good" person. The Ohio State University Human Development & Family Science Extension suggests sharing with your child the following traits of a moral person:

- Honest and trustworthy
- Faithful and loyal
- Hard-working, responsible and self-disciplined
- Kind, with concern for fellow human beings
- Independent and able to resist peer pressure
- Generous, giving and selfless
- Loving, empathetic, sensitive and tolerant
- Friendly, helpful and gentle
- Concerned for justice and respectful of legitimate authority, rules and laws
- Courageous, Peaceful, Calm and Serene

## WHAT YOU CAN DO

Raising ethical and respectful children can be a daunting task, especially during the teen years. The key is finding the right balance. Too much parental control can lead your teen to rebel and make poor choices just to get some freedom. But an overabundance of freedom leaves your teen feeling overwhelmed and gives him or her the idea that you don't really care what he or she does or what kind of person he or she becomes. The National Association of Elementary School Principals and the OSU Extension suggest the following strategies for teaching your child to be civil in any situation:

- **Explain the golden rule.** Don't simply have your child memorize the familiar "do unto others ..." mantra. Stress, instead, the importance of treating others in the same way that he or she would like to be treated.

# Civil Wars

## Discussion Questions



**Students, educators and families can discuss civility after viewing the show. Use these questions as a guide.** Connect with Kids

1. What does civility mean to you? What character traits would you associate with civil behavior? Uncivil behavior?
2. What are some examples of civil behavior? What are some examples of uncivil behavior?
3. Do you think teens today are less civil than teens 20 years ago? Explain. Do you think the standards for polite and civil behavior change with every generation? Explain.
4. Why do you think so many adults believe that teens today are more rude and disrespectful?
5. What important values have your parents taught you? Do you always live by these values? Explain.
6. When you have children, will you hold them to the same standards of behavior that your parents expect from you? Why or why not?
7. How is self-control related to civility? Can you have one without the other? Explain.
8. In your opinion, why is it important to act civilly toward another person, even if he or she is a stranger?
9. Think of a time when you witnessed one of your classmates being uncivil toward your teacher or another student. What do you think your classmate's motive was for acting uncivilly? How was the situation resolved?
10. What can you and your classmates do to promote civility in your school?

# Civil Wars

## Civil or Uncivil?

### Lesson Plan Grades 3-5



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#### OBJECTIVES

Students will be able to ..

- Generate examples of civil and uncivil behaviors.
- Work with group members to develop a scenario based on an uncivil behavior.
- Conclude the short- and long-term consequences of acting uncivilly

#### MATERIALS

Pens, pencils, Chalkboard or overhead projector

#### PROCEDURE

1. Explain to your students what it means to be civil toward others. NOTE: When you are civil to a person, you behave in a polite and respectful manner.
2. Ask your students to give examples of civil and uncivil behaviors that an adolescent might perform. Record their responses on the chalkboard or overhead projector.
  - **Civil examples** – Helping a new student find his or her way around your school, holding the door open for a friend, walking your younger sibling home from school, tutoring your next-door neighbor
  - **Uncivil examples** – Using bad language, teasing a new student, talking during class while your teacher is lecturing, not performing your chores at home so you can watch television, arguing with your parents, pushing a student because he or she is blocking the hallway, reading someone's diary
3. Divide your class into groups of four students. Assign each group one of the uncivil examples from the class list, or allow groups to use a new example that you approve. Explain to your students that they will develop and act out a scenario in which the uncivil action is performed. Share with your students the following rules:
  - *The scenario must include the following roles – student, friend/peer and parent/teacher.*
  - *The scenario must present the short- and long-term consequences of the uncivil action.*
4. Allow students time to develop and practice their scenarios with their group members. NOTE: You may want to assign this part of the activity as homework.
5. After all groups have performed their scenarios, lead a follow-up class discussion using the following questions as a guide:
  - *Do you think most youth today are polite and respectful toward others? Explain.*
  - *Are some behaviors more uncivil than others? Explain.*
  - *Why is it sometimes easier to act uncivilly than it is to act civilly?*
  - *Do your parents expect you to act civilly toward others? What are the consequences if you are uncivil?*
  - *What could you do to promote civility in your school?*

# Civil Wars

## This Is An Example Of...

### Lesson Plan Grades 6-8



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#### OBJECTIVES

Students will be able to...

- Conclude reasons for group membership.
- Identify examples of conflict among groups.
- Examine reasons for conflict among groups.
- Suggest alternatives to group conflict.

#### MATERIALS

- Pens, pencils
- *This Is An Example Of ...* Worksheet

#### PROCEDURE

1. Present the following scenario to the class: *Miguel is new to America. His parents have enrolled him in your school. On Miguel's first day of school, he doesn't speak to anyone. On his second day of school, Miguel meets other Hispanic students. By the end of Miguel's first week of school, he has made mostly Hispanic friends and speaks only Spanish. When he is in a class with no other Hispanic students, Miguel sits without saying a word. Soon, other students start making fun of Miguel because of the group he belongs to and the way he dresses.*

2. Discuss Miguel's situation by asking your students the following questions:
- *Has Miguel made a successful transition to the American way of life?*  
*Explain.*
  - *Do you think Miguel's classmates treat him civilly when they tease him?*  
*Explain.*
  - *Do you think that Miguel is satisfied with his daily school experience?*  
*Explain.*
  - *What can Miguel do to make his daily school experience more enjoyable?*
  - *What can you do to help make Miguel's daily school experience more enjoyable?*

3. Continue with a discussion about cultural diversity, incivility and groups:
- *Have you ever noticed that when a new student comes to your school, he or she will usually be attracted to a group that includes students who are similar to him or her? Why do you think this is?*
  - *What are some examples of different types of groups?*

NOTE: Students' answers should include religious, political, social and cultural groups.

- *What are some advantages of belonging to a group?*

NOTE: Students' answers should include a feeling of belonging, superiority, a sense of identity, and recognition by others inside and outside of the group.

- *What are some disadvantages of belonging to a group?*

NOTE: Students' answers should include stereotyping by others, internal/external group conflict, etc.

4. Distribute the *This Is An Example Of ...* worksheet. Explain to your students that they will examine causes for belonging to a group and conflict that exists between groups. Then, they will suggest ways to avoid conflict between and within groups and ways to promote civility among groups.



5. Allow students to work in groups of three or four to complete the *This Is an Example of ...* worksheet.
6. After students have completed their worksheets, allow time for groups to share their answers and their suggestions with the class.

**This Is An Example Of ... DIRECTIONS:**

Your group will work together to read each scenario and discuss the examples listed below. If a scenario matches one of the examples, write the number of the example next to the scenario. More than one example may represent each scenario.

**SCENARIOS:**

1. Ajani has been friends with Aman and Ade since their families moved from Africa three years ago. The boys enjoy going to the mall and watching movies together. When they go to the mall, they eat pizza and buy their clothes at the most popular stores. This is an example of:

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2. Jun, Shen and Lian have been a part of a group since the third grade. Lately, they have noticed that other members of their group have been acting differently toward them. The trio has not been invited to parties or to the movies when the others go. This is an example of:

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3. Emilio's friends have been fighting with Alek and his friends since the beginning of the year. It all started when one of Alek's friends made a negative comment about Italian immigrants.

This is an example of:

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4. Dalia and Elijah were asked to attend a Christmas party with their friends from school, but they decided to go to a Hanukah celebration instead.

This is an example of:

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**THIS IS AN EXAMPLE OF ...**

1. Members of a group experiencing personal advantage (companionship, sense of identity, recognition by others inside and outside of the group).
2. Members of a group experiencing a feeling of superiority.
3. Members of a group experiencing feelings of hostility and incivility toward another group.
4. Members of a group being treated as if they were all the same.
5. Members of a group being influenced by their culture and customs.
6. Members of a group being part of a subculture within the group.

**SUGGESTIONS:**

Based on your responses above, work with your group to answer the following questions: What are some ways in which you can avoid conflict between and within groups?

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What are some ways in which you can promote civility among groups?

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# Civil Wars

## Shades of Gray

### Lesson Plan Grades 9-12



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#### OBJECTIVES

Students will be able to ...

- Identify examples of incivility.
- Explain what constitutes incivility in various scenarios.
- Interview people to gain insight on their views about hazing and civility.
- Modify personal views about hazing and civility based on the insight gained from interviews.

#### MATERIALS

- Pens, pencils • *Shades of Gray* Worksheet

#### PROCEDURE

1. Begin this activity by asking your students to share their definitions of civility and incivility. As students share their definitions, ask them to provide specific examples of civility and incivility.
2. Explain to your students that sometimes it is difficult to know when your actions might be considered uncivil. EXAMPLE: You might think it is a harmless joke to start a rumor that your best friend has a crush on the new student, but your friend may think otherwise.
3. Lead a discussion about civility and hazing. Use the following questions as a guide:  
*What is the relationship between hazing and civility? Do you think hazing is acceptable? Explain. Where would you draw the line if you were involved in an act of hazing?*
4. Distribute the *Shades of Gray* worksheet to your students. Instruct them to record their personal views about hazing at the top of their worksheets.
5. Explain to your students that they will analyze various scenarios in order to determine if the students involved are acting without civility by participating in hazing. Then, have them interview at least three people (one student, one teacher and one additional adult) to learn their reactions to the scenarios and their views about hazing.
6. After conducting their interviews, have students re-evaluate their own views about hazing and civil behavior to determine if they need to modify their original views due to the influence from the people they interviewed.
7. After your students modify their views about hazing and civil behavior, allow class time for them to share their original views and whether or not their views changed during the course of the activity.

#### Shades of Gray

**First**, record your personal views about hazing and civil behavior:

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**Next**, review the scenarios below to determine if the students involved are participating in hazing, and use the grid provided to indicate the degree to which the students may be behaving in an uncivil manner. Write your conclusions about each scenario on the lines below.

1. Kelly and the kids in her neighborhood started a club. Sam just moved next-door to Kelly and wants to join her club. Before Sam can become a member, Kelly says Sam must recite an oath of allegiance in front of the club members. Is Kelly participating in hazing? \_\_\_\_\_
2. To initiate the freshman members on the basketball squad, Mario tells them they must carry the senior players' books to class for them. Is Mario participating in hazing? \_\_\_\_\_
3. The girls in Candice's clique all decide to dye their hair red and wear matching outfits as a symbol of loyalty and friendship. Candice hates the color red, but she wants to "fit in" with her friends. Is Candice participating in hazing? \_\_\_\_\_
4. Emile tutors Karshon in algebra. The two have become good friends, but Karshon's other friends don't like Emile and often tease him. Karshon doesn't want his friends to start teasing him, so he also teases Emile. Is Karshon participating in hazing? \_\_\_\_\_

**Then**, survey three people (one student, one teacher and one additional adult) and record their views about each scenario and hazing. Write the results of each interview in the chart below, using the back of this worksheet if necessary.

	Person 1-Student	Person 2-Teacher	Person 3-Adult
Scenario 1			
Scenario 2			
Scenario 3			
Scenario 4			

**Finally**, review the results from your interviews. Use your results to determine if your views about hazing and civility have changed since the beginning of this activity.