10 KEYS TO CIVILITY

1. **Respect others:** The ability to see the actual individual is part of acknowledging each other, and the first step to positive regard. Respect for the whole person entails listening to others’ opinions, their feelings, their time, even their physical space. At the core of “respect others” is the “golden rule” – do unto others as you would have them do unto you.
   
   “We must come into the presence of our fellow human beings with a sense of awe and gratitude.”
   - Stephen L. Carter, author of Civility

2. **Think Positively:** Wouldn’t life be more joyful if we all viewed it through a glass “half-full” rather than “half-empty?” Countless studies have demonstrated that those who think positively live longer and happier lives. A positive attitude is an emotional contagion we want to spread.
   
   “The happiness of your life depends on the quality of your thoughts.”
   - Marcus Aurelius

3. **Pay Attention:** How often do we go through our daily routines as human robots with little awareness of others surrounding us? The root of “attention” is “to attend to.” That means that every act of acknowledgement or kindness begins with “attending to” the other person. In other words, to be at our best in our human encounters, get off of auto pilot and pay attention.
   
   “The greatest gift you can give another is the purity of your attention.”
   - Richard Moss

4. **Make a difference:** This expression has become such a part of our cultural glossary that it has almost lost meaning. Almost is the key word, for the concept of making a difference has never been more valid. There are opportunities to make a difference in every encounter…. and there are plenty when you belong to the American Legion Auxiliary!

5. **Speak kindly:** The flip side of speak kindly is, Why be rude? Words of kindness can inspire others and lift their spirits. Isn’t that a great way to make a difference?
   
   “Be kind. No exceptions.”
   - Secret Agent L (Laura Miller)

6. **Say Thank You:** Such a simple deed, the acknowledging of an act of service or kindness by saying “thank you.”
   
   “There are two ways of spreading light: to be the candle or the mirror that reflects it.”
   - Edith Wharton

7. **Accept Others:** George Barnard Shaw, in his play “Pygmalion,” speaks of “having the same manner for all human souls: in short, behaving as if you were in heaven… where one soul is as good as another.” That is the crux of accepting others – welcoming all with the same enthusiasm as we experience in the feeling of belonging.
   
   “I have no methods; all I do is accept people as they are.”
   - Joan Rivers

8. **Rediscover Silence:** In an age when background noises are constant, some fear we are becoming accustomed to noise. Is that problem? Noise can take us away from ourselves; silence can be the bridge to our innermost thoughts and tranquility.
   
   “Let us be silent – so we may hear the whisper of the gods.”
   - Ralph Waldo Emerson

9. **Listen:** The act of listening takes place. Instead of focusing on what we want to say and our own needs, good listening requires that our attention go to others. How refreshing to demonstrate that we value others before ourselves. How non-competitive. How civil!
   
   “Knowledge speaks, but wisdom listens.”
   - Jimi Hendrix

10. **Keep Your Cool:** Medical science tells us that nonassertive behavior is a health risk. On the other hand, being a bully is just as unhealthy as being a doormat. The key is to find that happy medium where you express your needs without intruding on others’ needs and do it in a calm and kindly way.
   
   “Remember not only to say the right thing in the right place, but far more difficult still, to leave unsaid the wrong thing at the tempting moment.”
   - Benjamin Franklin

*Institute for Civility in Government* Co-Founders, Cassandra Dahnke and Tomas Spath