

CIVILITY

Is courtesy still common?

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WHO'S TO BLAME?

By **Darrin Youker**
READING EAGLE

There's plenty of blame to go around for why civility might be eroding.

Here's a sampling of what people say is the cause of our declining morals:

Corinne A. Gregory, founder of [SocialSmarts](#), blames the 1960s.

During that era, kids turned their back on what parents taught, said the 45-year-old mother of three. Social skills that were once passed down from generation to generation were shunned for a me-first attitude, Gregory argues.

"That is when the erosion of our society began," Gregory said. "That started our egocentric kind of attitude and it has not gotten better since."



Corinne A. Gregory

As a response, Gregory started SocialSmarts, a program in the Seattle area that teaches etiquette and behavior in public schools.

P.M. Forni, a professor of civility and Italian literature at Johns Hopkins University, Baltimore, believes we are seeing a trend toward people becoming more selfish.

"But in the last 40 years, as we were making strides toward a more just society, we were also becoming more and more self-absorbed," he writes in "[Choosing Civility: The 25 Rules of Considerate Conduct](#)."

"We now live in an age of the idolatry of self. Having made the self the central concern and value in our lives, we should not be surprised if self-centered behaviors have become more prevalent than altruistic ones," he writes. "We shouldn't be surprised if civility has suffered. The more we focus on ourselves and our self-gratification, the less moral energy we have available to spend on others and the less attuned we are to others' well-being."

Roberta Witman, a mother of two in Exeter Township, says the lack of discipline in the home has resulted in children growing up with no boundaries and no understanding for the consequences of their actions.

"There's no need for abuse, but a bit of discipline is necessary to raise our children with the respect that we were raised with," she said.

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P.M. Forni



Roberta Witman