

Introduction

Bruce A. Berger

This volume focuses on promoting civility in pharmacy education. While many in the academy have reported an increase in the incidence of incivilities in the classroom, the purpose of this work is not to debate whether this is true. The goal of this book is to describe the concerns involved and to provide realistic and practical solutions to the problems pharmacy educators face in a number of educational settings. And, as Kathy Franklin, an assistant professor of higher education at the University of Arkansas, says, “Historically, what’s happening today isn’t unusual. Are students today different from students ten years ago? Probably, because of demographic changes, consumerism, K-12 experiences. But is this a new trend? No” (1). Students today prefer self-directed learning, dislike close supervision, are cynical, tend to be less respectful or in awe of authority figures/faculty, desire immediate feedback, and like faculty who get to the point (2). What is especially different is that professors are held in lower esteem today, and this seems particularly insulting to many academics. Many professors “retaliate” with equally insulting behavior (1). As a result, incivilities often escalate, or the learning environment is destroyed or is greatly compromised.

This collection will explore promoting civility in several pharmacy education contexts. Brian Crabtree from the University of Mississippi

Bruce A. Berger, Ph.D., R.Ph., is Professor of Pharmacy Care Systems, Auburn University School of Pharmacy, 128 Miller Hall, Auburn University, AL 36849-5506 (E-mail: bergeba@auburn.edu).

[Haworth co-indexing entry note]: “Introduction.” Berger, Bruce A. Co-published simultaneously in *Journal of Pharmacy Teaching* (Pharmaceutical Products Press, an imprint of The Haworth Press, Inc.) Vol. 9, No. 3, 2002, pp. 1-10; and: *Promoting Civility in Pharmacy Education* (ed: Bruce A. Berger) Pharmaceutical Products Press, an imprint of The Haworth Press, Inc., 2003, pp. 1-10. Single or multiple copies of this article are available for a fee from The Haworth Document Delivery Service [1-800-HAWORTH, 9:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m. (EST). E-mail address: docdelivery@haworthpress.com].

<http://www.haworthpress.com/store/product.asp?sku=J060>

© 2003 by The Haworth Press, Inc. All rights reserved.

10.1300/J060v09n03_01

1

will discuss promoting civility in small classroom or small group settings. Diane Beck from Auburn University examines promoting civility in clinical settings. Holly Mason of Purdue University writes about civility in graduate education, while Dana Hammer from the University of Colorado discusses the relationship between professionalism and civility. Donna West from the University of Arkansas explores civility issues for new faculty members. Heidi Anderson-Harper of the University of Kentucky examines boundary violations and civility. I will discuss managing and promoting civility in large classrooms.

WHAT ARE INCIVILITIES?

Generally speaking, an incivility is a speech or action that is disrespectful or rude (3). At the American Association of Colleges of Pharmacy's Annual Meeting Teacher's Seminar in 2000, pharmacy educators were asked to identify incivilities. Appendix A summarizes their responses. In discussing what constitutes an incivility, as one might suspect, faculty did not all agree that certain behaviors were uncivil. For example, some faculty felt strongly that a student walking into class late was uncivil or rude, while many others said it did not bother them. Some faculty actually left the last row of the classroom open so that students coming in late could sit there without disrupting others. The important point that came out of this was that while faculty cannot always come to consensus on what constitutes uncivil behavior, faculty have a right (and an obligation) to make clear to students what kinds of behaviors they consider appropriate or inappropriate. In addition, students identified faculty sarcasm or public embarrassment of students (particularly when students ask questions in class) as the most annoying and frustrating uncivil behavior perpetrated by faculty. Each author will describe appropriate ways to prevent and manage incivilities in the educational environments they describe.

WHY DO INCIVILITIES OCCUR?

Appendix B summarizes faculty responses at the American Association of Colleges of Pharmacy's Annual Meeting Teacher's Seminar in 2000. The question posed was, "Why do incivilities occur?" While the list of incivilities by faculty and students is varied, with few exceptions, several items stand out. First, almost all of the incivilities listed can po-

tentially be prevented or eliminated. We may not be able to do much about faculty pay raises, but answering students' questions respectfully is certainly doable and warranted. Coming prepared to class is not only doable but an obligation of professors to students. It should be noted that the focus of this series of articles will be on what we, as faculty, can do to prevent and appropriately respond to incivilities in various educational settings. Changing our own behavior will be far more productive than trying to change our students' behavior. This does not mean that we should not set limits or boundaries. We should. It will simply be far more useful to evaluate our own attitudes and actions in trying to prevent or respond to incivilities.

Secondly, incivilities occur far more often when people are stressed. For students, this often happens right before a major exam. When people experience fairly high levels of stress, they are far less likely to be tolerant, compassionate, and patient. Sensitivity to these levels of stress on the part of faculty (and students) will go a long way toward alleviating some problems. This does not imply that faculty should ignore incivilities because students are stressed; it simply means that in formulating a response, compassion, patience, and understanding will be far more effective than a punitive, equally disrespectful response.

An example may help. I require a paper in my course. My syllabus clearly spells out font and margin requirements, minimum page length, and referencing requirements. In addition, students are told that one point will be deducted for each unique grammar and spelling error. A male student who had over 40 unique grammar and spelling errors on his paper literally burst into my office one day, without knocking, threw his paper on my desk, and said, "I didn't know that this was a f*cking English class!" He was obviously very distressed . . . and uncivil.

While many faculty would have supported me if I had "thrown the little SOB out," this would have had many negative consequences. The student would have gone to his classmates, and what they would have heard about was how I disrespectfully threw him out. I teach a communication class, and it certainly would not appear to be that I was practicing what I preached. In addition, if I had said something like, "You are not going to talk to me that way. Now get out of my office!" it is highly unlikely that he would have ever reflected on his own behavior. This is an especially important point regarding dealing with incivilities or rude or disrespectful behavior. Often when people are the target of uncivil behavior, they somehow believe that they have the right to be uncivil in return. However, this only serves to escalate the problem and ensures that very little reflection takes place.

Using effective listening skills and setting appropriate boundaries increases the probability that the problem will not escalate and something may be learned. In this case, I looked at the student and said quietly, “You are obviously very angry and upset about your grade and I want to talk to you about that. However, I don’t want to be yelled at and I don’t want to be sworn at. If you can talk to me without yelling and swearing, we can do so now, otherwise, you will need to leave until you are ready to do so. What would you like to do?” The student turned red. His embarrassment was an indication to me that he actually caught himself behaving badly. I don’t think this would have happened if I had yelled back. I honestly did not feel angry because I did not believe I had done anything wrong. In addition, I could see how stressed he was by the low grade he received. Nonetheless, a boundary needed to be set to clearly identify what behaviors I would and would not tolerate. Heidi Anderson-Harper will talk more about boundary violations in her section.

Incivilities also occur more often when there are unrealistic expectations on the part of faculty and students. Let’s first look at unrealistic expectations that faculty may have of students. While it would be a wonderful world if students were always attentive, were always respectful, were in awe of my expertise, would obey my authority and my rules without question (or forgetting), and would not have emotional outbursts on occasion, anyone who has taught for even the shortest length of time knows that this world doesn’t exist. Faculty who hold expectations of students that are unrealistic are often seen as punitive and uncaring in the classroom. When these expectations are not met, faculty blame students rather than adjusting expectations. Again, adjusting expectations does not mean that outbursts should be permitted; it means that they are handled with civility rather than disrespect.

Faculty sometimes inaccurately assess students’ prior knowledge as students enter a new course. This results in classroom sessions and assignments that are either pitched too high or too low, resulting in frustration for both faculty and students. While it is legitimate to hold students accountable for previous course learning and materials, it is probably unrealistic to expect instant recall or recall of information that was taught but never mastered as a result of lacking assessment methods. It is vitally important, therefore, to assess students’ prior knowledge when a new class begins, especially if previous course material is prerequisite learning.

Students also have irrational beliefs. Some believe that classes should be fun and exciting all of the time, that exams should be “easy,” and that professors should be available at the whim of the student. In fact, some

students believe that as “consumers” of education, they are owed these things. In addition, they believe that they should decide what is important, that they should decide how the class should be conducted, and that the professor works for them—*not* the university. A recent trend involves the student as a consumer or customer. The assumption here is that students are paying for a product—a degree; therefore, they are in the best position to know what they want and to decide whether the education they are getting is relevant and worthwhile. “The student-customer model seduces students into believing that they know what is best for them” (4). This consumerist model fails on a number of counts. First, a customer purchase does not obligate one to be accountable to the public. Yet, pharmacists are precisely that once they are conferred a degree and pass the board exams. Unlike a consumer scenario, paying for a degree (the product) does not entitle the student to getting one. The consumer model also assumes that the consumer is already knowledgeable about the product. That is certainly not true of students.

The mentality of this model creates problems in the classroom at numerous levels. Students believe that they are owed something. This may lend itself to uncivil behavior. Students will pressure faculty to satisfy the “consumer” and thus lower standards. It allows students to believe that they have a right to pressure faculty for better grades and, in general, promotes an antischolarly approach to higher education (4). The important point here is that students are *not* consumers and faculty need not “cave in” to this mentality and lower their standards to please students.

Lastly, powerlessness seems to breed incivility. When students feel powerless or when faculty do not feel supported for any number of reasons, some form of aggressive or passive-aggressive behavior often follows to make up for this feeling of powerlessness. Frequent input and feedback are antidotes to this kind of powerlessness, in addition to support of faculty by administrators.

CHARACTERISTICS OF FACULTY WITH FEWER INCIDENTS OF INCIVILITIES IN THE CLASSROOM

While we are often quick to point a finger at students and say that they are “less respectful than they used to be,” Boice concluded the following as a result of a study on classroom incivilities (CI):

Clearly teachers were the most crucial initiators of CI. And, as a rule, their most telling provocations occurred during the first few days of courses. Conversely, professors who most consistently displayed immediacies and positive motivators were least involved in incidents of CI, their own or their students'. (5)

What this means is teachers have a great deal of influence on whether incivilities occur in their classrooms. In fact, research confirms that a much higher frequency of incivilities by students occur in classrooms where the teacher has been uncivil or does not establish appropriate boundaries or guidelines right away (5).

More incivilities occur in classrooms with teachers who are less competent and less immediate in their behaviors. Competence refers to awareness and engaging in prosocial behaviors. Boice reports:

Students decide to resist and misbehave depending largely on two interrelated kinds of teacher behaviors. One is a matter of whether the teacher employs mostly prosocial motivators (e.g., "Do you understand?" and "You can do better") or antisocial motivators (e.g., threats and guilt induction). The second is about immediacy—the extent to which the teacher gives off verbal and nonverbal signs of warmth, friendliness, and liking (e.g., forward leans, smiles, purposeful gestures, eye contact). With positive motivators and particularly, immediacy, student inclinations to CI drop off dramatically. But without these skills, teachers are seen as cold, uncaring, and incompetent by their students—as deserving of incivilities. (5)

Other low immediacy behaviors included fast-paced, noninvolving lectures; low or no involvement outside of class; ill-defined or no office hours (or office hours not honored or kept); statements indicating that they do not wish to be bothered outside of class; discouraging questions in class or in some way embarrassing or putting down the questioner (being funny or sarcastic at the student's expense). Power and respect in the classroom is relational. Development of the teacher-student relationship is critical to deterring or decreasing incivilities. More on this subject will be covered in each educational setting.

One last point needs to be made in this section. If we, as faculty, are to be as effective as possible in developing civil behaviors in our students, we must be role models—mentors. Being the students' friends or parents does not work, and quite frankly, it is inappropriate. Some ju-

Senior faculty members make the mistake of trying to befriend students. Students do not need us to be their friends. They don't need faculty drinking buddies. They need mentors. Mentors model the desired attitudes and behaviors. Mentors care deeply about their protégés. Mentors simply respect and maintain the necessary boundaries in the professional-client relationship. Without these boundaries, confusion exists in the relationship.

Boundaries are limits that allow for a safe connection based on the client's needs. When these limits are altered, what is allowed in the relationship becomes ambiguous. Such ambiguity is often expressed as an intrusion into the sphere of safety. The pain of a violation is frequently delayed, and the violation itself may not be recognized or felt until harmful sequences emerge. (6)

We are entrusted with a great deal of power by our students because of our expertise. As a result, they are put in a very vulnerable place. We are entrusted to put their needs ahead of ours. Boundary violations are acts that breach the core intent of the professional-client relationship and, as a result, violate or destroy safety. Befriending the very students we are evaluating and mentoring confuses the boundary.

Finally, faculty must realize that we are "on" all of the time. Our behavior is being constantly monitored by students whether we like it or not. We must become aware of our own attitudes and behaviors if we are to effectively model the attitudes and behaviors we desire.

EMOTIONAL IMPACT

It is unfortunate that when people discuss incivilities very rarely do they talk about the emotional impact. Generally, they discuss what happened and ascribe blame. It is rare when people talk about what happened emotionally, yet it is the emotional impact of incivilities that can often disrupt a student's desire to learn or a faculty member's desire to teach. When the learning environment becomes unsafe or threatened due to an incivility or repeated incivilities, the student's education always suffers. Appendix C summarizes faculty responses on the emotional impact of incivilities. The emotional impact of an incivility can be devastating. Incivilities can cause professors to lose self-esteem and self-confidence in their teaching, lose self-confidence in their research efforts, abandon teaching, become indifferent in the classroom, and fear

for their safety (this is especially true for female faculty). Incivilities can cause students to become increasingly uninvolved in a course, become increasingly hostile in the classroom, fear for their safety (this is especially true when boundaries are violated—more on this later), and lose their desire to learn (6).

SUMMARY

Incivilities are often difficult to cope with in an educational environment. They can disrupt learning and have a lasting emotional impact on both students and faculty. It is our hope that this book will provide you with ways to promote civility and to prevent and manage incivilities in different educational settings within pharmacy.

REFERENCES

1. Schneider A. Insubordination and intimidation signals the end of decorum in many classrooms. *Chron Higher Educ.* 1998; (Mar 27):A1-A14. Available at <http://chronicle.com/colloquy/98/rude/background.htm>.
2. Little L. Leading four generations. *Acad Leader.* 2000; (Mar):5-7.
3. Teaching Resources Center, College of Arts and Sciences, Indiana University. Available at <http://www.indiana.edu/~teaching>.
4. Albanese M. Students are not customers: A better model for medical education. *Acad Med.* 1999; 74:1172-86.
5. Boice B. Classroom incivilities. *Res Higher Educ.* 1996; 37:453-86.
6. Peterson MR. *At personal risk: Boundary violations in professional-client relationships.* New York: W. W. Norton & Co.; 1992.

APPENDIX A. What Are Incivilities?

- Several types
- Student to faculty
 - Faculty to student
 - Student to administration
 - Student to student
 - Faculty to faculty
 - Faculty to administration
 - Administration to faculty
- Anything that distracts from learning
- Cell phones, computers
- Lack of confidentiality
- Sexual harassment
- Cheating
- Breaking rules
 - Food in class
 - Newspapers, littering
- Demeaning, condescending behavior/attitudes
- Locking doors to keep out latecomers
- Sarcastic remarks by students and/or faculty
- Abusing a learning disability
- Not taking appropriate responsibility
- Electronic incivility–bulletin boards, e-mails, the actual message content
- Cultural, generational differences in values

KEEP IN MIND, WHAT ONE CONSIDERS TO BE UNCIVIL BEHAVIOR (WALKING IN LATE TO CLASS), ANOTHER MIGHT FIND PERFECTLY ACCEPTABLE OR TOLERABLE. FACULTY HAVE THE RIGHT TO EXPRESS, UP FRONT, WHAT THEY CONSIDER TO BE INAPPROPRIATE BEHAVIOR IN THEIR CLASSES. REASONS SHOULD BE PROVIDED.

APPENDIX B. Why Do Incivilities Occur?

- Students
 - Lack of respect for others
 - Needs of student not met or not met with dignity
 - No clear expectations given
 - Inappropriate “role model” as instructor
 - Poor communication by instructor
 - Lack of fairness
 - No energy from instructor
 - Outdated materials
 - Lack of respect by instructor
 - Not enough feedback
 - Material covered and tests are incongruent

- Don't understand relevance of material
- Entitlement mentality—the student as consumer
- Lack of power by student or inappropriate use of power by faculty
- Boundary violations
- Lack of preparation by faculty
- Faculty arrive late and/or ends too early or too late
- Instructor's attitude (arrogance, indifference, etc.)
- Inconsistency in expectations from one faculty member to another
- Faculty allow incivilities to occur . . . don't say anything, ignore
- Personal problems
- Work
- Faculty member is unapproachable
- Lack of dialog
- Faculty
 - Overworked, underpaid, lack of resources
 - Poor attitudes by students
 - Frustration, stress
 - Students come to class unprepared
 - Unrealistic or inconsistent expectations
 - Student lack of understanding about patient care
 - Lack of reward for teaching
 - Personal problems
 - Different goals, standards, values than students
 - CHAOS!
 - Boundary violations

APPENDIX C. Emotional Impact of Incivilities on Faculty and Students.

- Anger
- Frustration
- Apathy—withdrawal—depression
- Insecurity
- Helplessness
- Fear—threat
- Poor performance
- Manipulated
- Intimidated
- Dread (of going to class, of teaching the class)
- Defensiveness—isolation, victimization
- Hostile environment
- Grapevine—rumors about the class

INCIVILITIES CAN BE DEVASTATING TO FACULTY AND STUDENTS. THEY CAN RUIN CAREERS OR INJURE SELF-CONFIDENCE AND CAUSE DESPONDENCE. THEY ARE TO BE TAKEN SERIOUSLY.