



**Ombuds Outlook — April 2014**  
Ombuds/Dispute Resolution Services for Faculty  
<http://ombudsfac.unm.edu>

**Ombuds Workshop for April/May 2014**

Clarifying Ambiguity

April 16th, 12-1:15pm, UNM Business Center Rm 1016

Many times the root of a disagreement may be found in the ambiguous use of words. An ambiguous statement by another person might affect your ability to make decisions and take appropriate actions.

Margaret Menache, an ODR Faculty Representative, will lead this workshop. It will focus on (1) language choices you can make to be clear in your statements, and (2) neutral clarifying questions you can ask when confronted with ambiguity.

Margaret Menache is Assistant Professor Emerita, Family and Community Medicine.

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**Embracing Civility and Self-Expression & Managing Rudeness**

P.M. Forni (2002). *In Choosing Civility: The Twenty-Five Rules of Considerate Conduct*

Civility is a necessity for achieving a balanced and happy life, and self-expression is a key part of embracing civility. When we think before we act, it is less likely that we will rush into an action and cause damage. Exercising restraint and not acting solely on our emotions can help us to navigate challenging circumstances.

- When we want to rush into action it can be helpful to ask:

- Do I really want to do this?
- Is anybody going to be hurt by this?
- Will I like having done this?

Sometimes it might feel like restraint is a limitation of our self expression. While our immediate gratification might be limited, contentment can be reached. Contentment is the result of many good choices that we make while interacting with others.

The focus of our society has been on encouraging self-esteem, while paying much less attention to self-control.

The imbalance of this focus breeds people who are self-absorbed. In order to be attentive, considerate, courteous and kind, self-control is in order. When people are only concerned about themselves and their own interests, hurt is bound to ensue for others.

In another book by Forni, *The Civility Solution*, he offers eight “rules” that can help people reduce the rudeness that sometimes emerges from having a self-centered outlook in difficult circumstances.

1. Slow down and be present in your life.
2. Listen to the voice of empathy.
3. Keep a positive attitude.
4. Respect others and grant them plenty of validation.
5. Disagree graciously and refrain from arguing.
6. Get to know the people around you.
7. Pay attention to the small things.
8. Ask, don't tell.

Prepared by Erin Watley, ODR Graduate Assistant, Spring 2014

## Responding to Passive-Aggressive Workplace Behavior

This material about passive-aggressive workplace behavior, while addressed to department chairs, has relevance to faculty colleagues as well. The following two references and links offer more detail.

R. Kent Crookston, *The Department Chair: A resource for Academic Administrators*, Summer 2012, Vol. 23, No. 1, and book *Working with Problem Faculty*, Jossey-Bass, 2012.

<http://www.departmentchairs.org/Sample-Article/working-with-the-passive-aggressive-colleague.aspx>

Tomorrow's Professor, Message #822: from Chapter 11, *Coping with the Passive-Aggressive Faculty Member*, in Jeffrey L. Buller, & Mary Baldwin College, *The Essential Department Chair: A Practical Guide to College Administration*, Anker Publishing Company, 2006.

<http://cgi.stanford.edu/~dept-ctl/tomprof/posting.php?ID=822>

Some brief points:

- ◆ Passive-aggressive actions, verbal and nonverbal, are an indirect outlet of a person's frustration, upset, anger. They are often expressed as blaming others and procrastination.
- ◆ Assertive actions, verbal and nonverbal, demonstrate a person's confidence and ability to share opinions, thoughts and feelings with respect for the other person(s).
- ◆ University workplace environments and interactions can be both freeing and stifling in the expression of a range of emotions.
- ◆ A helpful mindset for responding to passive-aggressive expressions is to take it as an opportunity to discuss frustrations and discontent.

Several possible responses are offered by the authors noted above. Please read their materials for further explanation.

- ◆ Clarify values and expectations.
- ◆ Set specific performance goals and specific timetables for completion.
- ◆ Follow policy.
- ◆ Build trust.
- ◆ Build in, where possible, some choice and flexibility on work assignments.
- ◆ Hold colleague accountable for results.
- ◆ Evaluate yourself and your perceptions.
- ◆ Listen: Reflect more. Reflex less. (Jean Civikly-Powell)
- ◆ Build in regularly scheduled progress reports on work assignments.
- ◆ Acknowledge improvements and work done well with a sincere compliment, and bring counterproductive behavior to the conversation, as needed.
- ◆ Be persistent and consistent.
- ◆ Do not engage in power struggles or arguments, or allow diversions from stated goals.
- ◆ Examine complaints of unfairness.

Key phrases for online searches for additional information:

- ◆ workplace negativity, workplace gossip
- ◆ the cost of conflict
- ◆ workplace conflict resolution
- ◆ workplace climate
- ◆ healthy workplace culture
- ◆ appreciative inquiry in the workplace

"Right now, my life is just one learning experience after another.  
 By the end of the week, I should be a genius."  
 – Jeanette Osias, Artist