

# 10 ESSENTIAL ELEMENTS DIGNITY

## 1. ACCEPTANCE OF IDENTITY

Approach people as being neither inferior nor superior to you; give others the freedom to express their authentic selves without fear of being negatively judged; interact without prejudice or bias, accepting that characteristics such as race, religion, gender, class, sexual orientation, age, and disability are at the core of their identities.

## 2. RECOGNITION

Validate others for their talents, hard work, thoughtfulness, and help; be generous with praise; give credit to others for their contributions, ideas, and experiences.

## 3. ACKNOWLEDGMENT

Give people your full attention by listening, hearing, validating, and responding to their concerns and what they have been through.

## 4. INCLUSION

Make others feel that they belong, at all levels of relationship (family, community, organization, and nation).

## 5. SAFETY

Put people at ease at two levels: physically, so they feel free from the possibility of bodily harm, and psychologically, so they feel free from concern about being shamed or humiliated and free to speak without fear of retribution.

## 6. FAIRNESS

Treat people justly, with equality, and in an evenhanded way according to agreed-on laws and rules.

## 7. INDEPENDENCE

Encourage people to act on their own behalf so that they feel in control of their lives and experience a sense of hope and possibility.

## 8. UNDERSTANDING

Believe that what others think matters; give them the chance to explain their perspectives and express their points of view; actively listen in order to understand them.

## 9. BENEFIT OF THE DOUBT

Treat people as if they are trustworthy; start with the premise that others have good motives and are acting with integrity.

## 10. ACCOUNTABILITY

Take responsibility for your actions; apologize if you have violated another person's dignity; make a commitment to change hurtful behaviors.

# 10 TEMPTATIONS TO VIOLATE DIGNITY

## 1. TAKING THE BAIT

Don't take the bait. Don't let the bad behavior of others determine your own. Restraint is the better part of dignity. Don't justify getting even. Do not do unto others as they do unto you if it will cause harm.

## 2. SAVING FACE

Don't succumb to the temptation to save face. Don't lie, cover-up, or deceive yourself. Tell the truth about what you have done.

## 3. SHIRKING RESPONSIBILITY

Don't shirk responsibility when you have violated the dignity of others. Admit it when you make a mistake, and apologize if you hurt someone.

## 4. SEEKING FALSE DIGNITY

Beware of the desire for external recognition in the form of approval and praise. If we depend on others alone for the validation of our worth, we are seeking false dignity. Authentic dignity resides within us. Don't be lured by false dignity.

## 5. SEEKING FALSE SECURITY

Don't let your need for connection and relationship compromise your own dignity. If we remain in a relationship in which our dignity is routinely violated, our desire for connection has outweighed our need to maintain our own dignity. Resist the temptation to settle for false security.

## 6. AVOIDING CONFLICT

Stand up for yourself. Don't avoid confrontation when your dignity is violated. Take action. A violation is a signal that something in a relationship needs to change.

## 7. BEING THE VICTIM

Don't assume that you are the innocent victim in a troubled relationship. Open yourself to the idea that you might be contributing to the problem. We need to look at ourselves as others see us.

## 8. RESISTING FEEDBACK

Don't resist feedback from others. We often don't know what we don't know. We all have blind spots; we all unconsciously behave in undignified ways. We need to overcome our protective instincts and accept constructive criticism. Feedback gives us an opportunity to grow.

## 9. BLAMING AND SHAMING OTHERS TO DEFLECT YOUR OWN GUILT

Don't blame and shame others to deflect your own guilt. Control the urge to defend yourself by making others look bad.

## 10. ENGAGING IN FALSE INTIMACY AND DEMEANING GOSSIP

Beware of the tendency to connect by gossiping about others in a demeaning way. Being critical and judgmental of others when they are not present is harmful and undignified. If you want to create intimacy with another, speak the truth about yourself, about what is happening in your inner world, and invite the person to do the same.