Let’s Circle Up

The Ten Temptations to Violate Dignity

Taking the Bait: Don’t take the bait. Don’t let the bad behavior of others determine your own. Don’t justify getting even.

Saving Face: Don’t succumb to the temptation to save face. Tell the truth about what you have done.

Shirking Responsibility: Take responsibility when you have violated the dignity of others. Admit it when you make a mistake, and apologize if you hurt someone.

Seeking False Dignity: If we depend on others alone for validation of our worth, we are seeking false dignity. Beware of the desire for external recognition. Authentic dignity resides within us. Don’t be lured by false dignity.

Seeking False Security: If we remain in a relationship in which our dignity is routinely violated, our desire for connection has outweighed our need to maintain our dignity. Resist the temptation to settle for false security.

Avoiding Conflict: Don’t avoid confrontation when your dignity is violated. A violation is a signal that something in a relationship needs to change. Take action.

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.

Resisting Feedback: Don’t resist feedback from others. We all have blind spots; we all unconsciously behave in undignified ways. Feedback helps us grow.

Blaming and Shaming Others to Deflect Your Own Guilt: Control the urge to defend yourself by making others look bad.

Engaging False Intimacy and Demeaning Gossip: Beware of the tendency to connect by gossiping about others. Being critical and judgmental about others when they are not present is harmful and undignified.

From Donna Hicks, Dignity: The Essential Role It Plays in Resolving Conflict (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2011).