

Interpersonal Diplomacy: The Value of Keeping the Peace

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2/24/16 UPDATE: In learning more about [diplomacy](#) and [etiquette](#), I realized this article really needed a serious overhaul. Entire paragraphs have been deleted and brand new ones added, with only a few elements kept from the original version. I sincerely hope this revision is more helpful to you all.

"I often used to find myself in conversations with people who are self-destructive and negative. They were so ardent when describing their negative self-image to me that my protective, nurturing instincts kicked in and I would find myself trying to massage their ego, in some misguided attempt to bolster their confidence and shake them out of their pessimistic view. I invariably failed; my belief in them and their potential was clearly never as strong as their own belief that they were ugly, shy, unable, or whatever it might be. They were completely enraptured and hypnotized by the little voice in the back of their heads, the one who pretends to be your friend but secretly wishes to destroy your entire life...the trouble was that once I was sold on their idea of themselves, I was no longer as interested in their company because I invariably felt completely drained afterward. Eventually, I developed a new tactic, a new response for dealing with their self-loathing, one that never fails. 'If you say so.'... You've just managed to reach the place thousands of mystics and seers have struggled to attain through years of meditation, and all with four little words. And without Prozac. My gift to you. You're welcome."

– [The Anti-Terrorist](#)

Diplomacy, [simply defined](#), is a "skill in dealing with others without causing bad feelings." Given that [only individuals exist](#), whatever cooperation is available in this world is made possible not by "society," but by individual humans. Therefore, the utility of etiquette is to function as a "social lubricant," especially in the context of superficial interactions between two people who would otherwise not naturally get along.

A large part of the reason for adages such as, "In polite society, don't talk about politics, sex, or religion," is to grease the skids of business negotiations, as well as other tense scenarios where the window of time you spend with particular strangers is already quite small.

Whether it be [police interrogations](#) or Thanksgiving dinner with extended family, refraining from talking about divisive topics with *some* individuals might just keep the peace. Techniques such as "[non-violent communication](#)" (NVC) have the potential to smooth over tensions, yet the experience of being the [grey man](#) during a [political fieldtrip](#) shows that discretion really is the better part of valor; simply put, while you could invest time and money into learning NVC, you could just lower your opportunity costs by avoiding fruitless "[debate](#)" with disagreeable individuals.

Good [role-modeling](#) is vital whenever one is attempting to use diplomatic tact. Two months ago, [I got accused by James Babb of "issuing orders" to the audience](#) for merely suggesting other approaches to teaching folks about [jury nullification](#) (as well as the method of jury nullification itself). I only mention it here to illustrate how the sheer lack of basic etiquette can really turn people off to anything else you may have to say, and even statisticians complain about this phenomenon. If an indispensable element of securing our liberties is "winning hearts & minds," then I fail to see how inconsiderate manners in the public arena furthers the accomplishment of that goal.



[Internal balkanization](#), which is colloquially known as “infighting,” often happens when there is a lack of interpersonal diplomacy. Such occurrences could have been avoided if at least one of the parties, if not preferably both, had acted like adults with the simplest of etiquette. Failure to [keep your own counsel](#) is an excellent way to burn bridges with business associates, open-source intelligence contacts, and even political alliances. All you have to do is peruse the examples of miscreants like [Jim Stach](#), [Rick Light](#), [Jerry DeLemus](#), and [Brandon Curtiss](#) in order to understand that not adhering to the biblical golden rule of “treating others as you would like to be treated,” only sets the stage for counter-productive bickering and demoralization.

[Peaceful coexistence](#) with a variety of individual personality temperaments is the whole point of “killing them with kindness.” Learning social graces is an admirable pursuit, but don’t allow it to overwhelm your own sense of self; you’re an individual, too! Practiced empathy is what you’re aiming for, and this comes from quiet confidence, *not* insecure psychobabble. [As Thomas Jefferson said in 1785](#):

“The legitimate powers of government extend to such acts only as are injurious to others. But it does me no injury for my neighbour to say there are twenty gods, or no god. It neither picks my pocket nor breaks my leg.”

Keeping the peace is a balancing act, and I only care about what others (might) think about me to the extent it affects my own freedom; otherwise, they’re entitled to their own opinion, which, just like assholes, everyone has one, so it’s no skin off my nose.