

TEN ESSENTIAL ELEMENTS OF DIGNITY

For all of us to honor the worth and value of others, and ourselves, we must know and live by the ten essential elements of dignity, according to Dr. Donna Hicks, author of *Dignity* and our partner in this project. Since our lack of awareness can make us violate others' dignity, we *must learn how that can happen*.

We also must develop our sensitivity to the ways others experience us. With a developed sensitivity to others' points of view, we can minimize the times when we unknowingly violate their dignity and increase our chances of communicating that we value everyone we meet.

Dr. Hicks compiled this list of ten essential elements of dignity from asking three critical questions. We challenge you to engrain these essential elements into your life by always asking yourself...

- *What does it look like when I violate someone's dignity or compromise my own?*
- *If I were to say that I conducted myself with dignity, what would my behavior look like?*
- *If I wanted to treat someone with dignity, what would I do?*

ACCEPTANCE OF IDENTITY

1

It is important that we always approach people as neither inferior nor superior to us and that we give others the freedom to express their authentic selves without fear of being negatively judged – that we interact without prejudice or bias, accepting how race, religion, gender, class, sexual orientation, age, disability, etc. are at the core of their identities.

RECOGNITION

2

We want to always validate others for their talents, their hard work, their thoughtfulness, and their help – be generous with praise and give credit to others for their contributions, ideas and experience.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

3

To honor someone's dignity, give them your full attention by listening, hearing, validating and responding to their concerns and what they have been through.

INCLUSION

4

It is so important that we make others feel that they belong at all levels of relationship – whether it's family, community, organization...or nation.

SAFETY

5

We need to put people at ease at two levels: *physically*, where they feel free of bodily harm; and *psychologically*, where they feel free of concern about being shamed or humiliated – that they feel free to speak without fear of retribution.

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6

FAIRNESS

It's critical that we treat people justly, with equality, and in an evenhanded way, according to agreed-upon laws and rules.

7

INDEPENDENCE

We want to always empower others 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

To believe that what others think matters – to give them the chance to explain their perspectives and express their points of view – to actively listen and understand them.

9

BENEFIT OF THE DOUBT

This is when we treat people as trustworthy, starting with the premise that others have good motives and are acting with integrity.

10

ACCOUNTABILITY

Always take responsibility for your actions – if you have violated the dignity of another, apologize – make a commitment to change hurtful behaviors.

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