

Alpine County Choose Civility Campaign

(An initiative of the Alpine County Superintendent of Schools)



January Focus:

Refrain From Idle Complaints

One of my favorite proverbs is from the Chinese: “*Don’t curse the darkness—light a candle*”. Complaining, instead of working to solve an issue, feels to me like spreading misery. Of course, there are times when we should civilly voice displeasure or concern because doing so might bring desired results. It’s the unproductive complaining that doesn’t serve a positive purpose to solve a problem that is instead idle complaining. This kind of complaining is akin to whining and as such can be intrusive on the positive mood of others.

Idle complaints focus on problems rather than solutions and are negative, pessimistic and can be emotionally draining to those on the receiving end. I admit to gently easing out of a friendship because this person often called just to complain about all that was wrong with life. By the time I would hang up the phone, I felt negative myself. I would rather direct my energies at being grateful, content and satisfied with my lot in life. I believe it’s the civil thing to do to be an uplifting and positive influence to those around us as often as we can. As Dr. P.M. Forni, author of Choosing Civility: The Twenty-Five Rules of Considerate Conduct says, “Tranquility, joy and happiness are, to a large extent, gifts we give to ourselves. They are the result of the smart choices in the way we think and the way we act. There is no way to erase misery from the face of the earth, but you can always focus on the glory that remains. Begin by letting go of unproductive complaining.” This can be a gift we give to others. So the next time you catch me complaining about the stubbornly uncooperative weather, you might remind me to check my idle complaints...in a civil tone of voice, of course.