

Alpine County Choose Civility Campaign

(An initiative of the Alpine County Superintendent of Schools)



October Focus:

Respect Other People's Space

One of the ways we can treat others in a civil manner is to respect their personal space. We can do this by standing at an appropriate distance when talking to another person. You can often tell if you've gotten too close if the person you're speaking with backs away. Also not everyone is comfortable being touched during conversation so be sure to pay attention to any negative reaction should you, for example, pat someone on the arm while talking. Remember too that people have personal space they consider their territory such as their desk area at school or in the office and they may not welcome others who get into that territory to borrow or use things without asking. You may notice another's territory in other situations like when a family stakes out their territory at the park or beach with their blanket, chairs and baskets. Trying not to infringe on that territory shows respect.

We can find more examples of respecting other people's space right in our own homes. Living rooms, dining rooms and kitchens are often viewed as shared space but a bedroom or bathroom might be considered personal space. Young children can be taught to respect family members' personal space and time by learning to leave someone alone who is in the bathroom or napping or studying in their own bedroom. This is one way children can learn about respect and boundaries.

Additional ways to respect another's space include not tailgating when driving (and that's a safety issue too!), taking two parking spaces or using a parking space reserved for handicapped drivers. It is considerate to note how crowded an elevator is when you are waiting to get on. Be sure to follow the general rule to let others vacate the elevator before you try to get in and why not wait for a later elevator should the one you are trying to get on be as stuffed as a can of sardines.

Remember that the quality of people's work or school experience depends heavily on how they get along with other people. Respecting the personal space of others is one of the civil ways we can build those positive relationships.