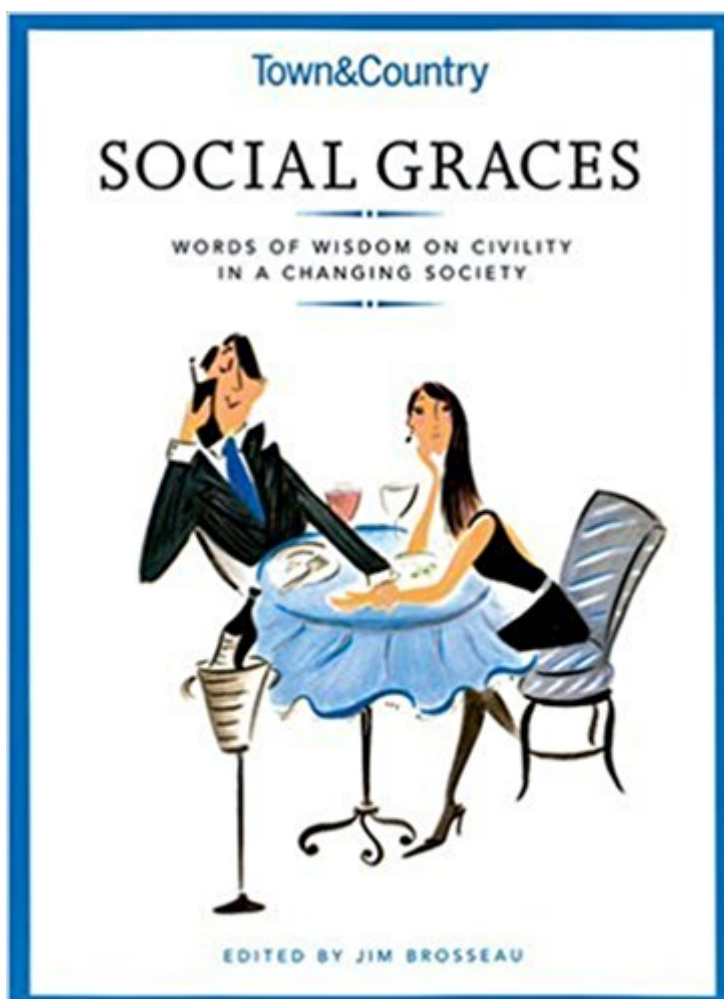


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Town & Country Social Graces: Words Of Wisdom On Civility In A Changing Society



Synopsis

For more than 150 years, Town & Country has stood for quality and refinement. So who better to offer sound guidance on leading a civilized life in a world of eroding social graces? Here, 50 of the keenest and wittiest observers of our changing culture put forward their incisive—and thoroughly modern—views on sidestepping today's most prevalent, perilous social landmines. From such topics as cell phone and E-mail etiquette to guilt-free apologies, these 64 timely essays offer astuteness without stuffiness. Relish the humor and insights of such writers as Jonathan Alter, Anthony Bourdain, Jay McInerney, Sue Miller, Peggy Noonan, Cokie Roberts, Jane Smiley, Wendy Wasserstein, and many others. The 10 new contributions include: "Polite or Pass?" by William Zinsser; "To Make a Long Story Short," by Patricia Marx; and "Thanks for the Compliments," by Jeanne Wolf.

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Customer Reviews

Civility is "under assault," says Town & Country editor-in-chief Pamela Fiori, and in a collection of the magazine's columns, Town & Country Social Graces: Words of Wisdom on Civility in a Changing Society, she and 46 other writers share their views on manners. Cokie Roberts and Steven V. Roberts tell how consideration for each other, such as using a tiny book light so as not to keep the other one awake, has kept their marriage strong. Anne Bernays speaks about grandparent-grandchild relations, and Wendy Wasserstein explains her point of view on proper theatergoing behavior. This compact book, edited by Jim Brosseau, lacks only author biographies.

Excellent

This little book is an EXCELLENT READ!! I think everyone of COLLEGE AGE should read it, while they are still young enough to train themselves and put the tips from this little book into practice (even though I am much older than college age!) The world would be a far better place to live if ONLY people were more civil to each other (both in person and online).

If you or someone you love has ever had their cell phone ring during a performance, church service, wedding, movie, etc....YOU or they need to read this book. It's not about stuffy manners. It's about consideration of your fellow man. Whether it's not sending thank-you notes, cell phones ringing inappropriately, self-centered children interrupting or any of the subjects contained in this book, manners matter. No one is asking anyone to wear white gloves or to place a salt cellar at your dinner plate. It's about greasing the gears of civilized society. One hilarious chapter deals with Politically Correct Americans making a HUGE ruckus over Europeans smoking. Throwing a massive tantrum over someone smoking in a French or German Restaurant will only identify you as a boorish American, and get you nothing more than a sideways glance and a shrug...while asking someone kindly if they would mind not smoking around you might just get the desired effect. Another favorite chapter of mine was close to home, as I sometimes feel that the Tattoo Fairy has visited me in the middle of the night and inscribed "Tell me about your SEX LIFE" on my forehead. People just love to tell me their most intimate details which I do not seek and have not asked for. Evidentially, it is at epidemic stages and I am not alone in this observation. This is a perfect length for a plane trip or a car trip, and you will nod in recognition and laugh out loud at some of these situations which require that we all brush up a bit on our manners.

A wonderful collaboration by a group of talented men and women that would make an excellent gift for most everyone. I will begin this review with notes on the introduction and all nine chapters and bring it to a conclusion with a bit of fanatical gushing. The introduction of 'Town & Country's Social Graces' is a cleverly written and well thought out piece written by the Editor in Chief of the magazine, Pamela Fiori. It first details why the Social Graces department was created in 1995. Then it goes on to describe some of the subjects that the article addresses. For example, some of the issues faced were about the "flagrant use of cell phones in public by people who simply cannot keep

their business to themselves" and "the arrogance of certain individuals who, once in the driver's seat (literally), believe they have 'The Right of Way'". It is clear by this introduction alone that the essays that fill this book are abundant with intelligence, wit, and acuity. Chapter one comprises eight essays that focus on the subject of 'Modern Times'. The first essay, 'Privacy... or What's Left of It' by Jay McInerney, is about just what the title leads you to believe, privacy or lack thereof. It's told with a sense of humour but don't let the jokes fool you into thinking that the author isn't serious about humans' dwindling respect for privacy, both their own and others'. The fifth essay, 'The Sound and My Fury' by William Norwich is perhaps my favourite out of the chapter because I can relate to it so well. It's about how rudely people can react when politely asked to speak more quietly when out in public, to silence their dog's incessant barking, or to take a break from playing a loud instrument in the next apartment over. A few other interesting essays that can be found in this chapter are 'On Accountability', 'The Etiquette of E-Mail', and 'Smugly American'. Chapter two comprises five essays written about how 'Little Things Mean A Lot'. The very first essay in this chapter, 'On Being a Gentleman' by David Brown, was my personal favourite. The author not only gave examples of true gentlemen and what made them so worthy of the title, but he also included a list of rules to live by. If more people were able to find it in themselves to follow at least one, two, or, even better, three of these rules on a daily basis their good attitudes would spread out like the rippling effect caused by a stone tossed into a body of water. Just imagine the possibilities. A couple other interesting chapters are 'Respecting Our Elders' and 'Say "Thank You"'. Chapter three comprises seven essays written on the subject of 'Family Affairs'. My favourite essay in the chapter is 'Missing the Point' by Patricia Beard, which is about how adults should treat children with the same courtesy they would treat their spouse or friends. Other interesting essays are 'Nagging Habits', 'A Single Parent's Say', and 'With All Due Respect', the latter of which concerns those irritating, though well-meaning, questions about an unborn baby to an expecting mother. Chapter four comprises six essays written on the subject of 'A Word's Worth'. The essay in this chapter that stood out most to me is 'Put It in Writing' by the author of the book 'The Writer's Rules', Helen Gurley Brown. The essay was about how letters, whether typed on a computer or typewriter, or handwritten will brighten somebody's day, especially if they're unexpected and much deserved. A list of clever ideas can be found to give the reader some examples of how to write a good letter, such as "short is usually better than long", "write the thank-you now", and "give a little extra thought to writing a letter expressing your anger". A couple other interesting essays are 'Just Say You're Sorry' and 'In Memoriam', the latter of which is about the proper etiquette that should be shown when giving eulogies and having a memorial service for a deceased loved one. Chapter five, 'Honour Thy Neighbour', comprises six essays. In this chapter,

the essay that most stood out to me was 'The Boor of the Grease Paint' by Wendy Wasserstein. The essay was about how carelessly disruptive people can be in theatres or, in some cases, just be plain rude to those around them. Anyone who has ever been forced to sit through a ballet, play, movie, etcetera, surrounded by people coughing, engaged in conversations on cell phones, or unwrapping candy, will appreciate this particular essay. Other essays that stood out in this chapter are 'Cellular Phonies' and 'Don't Waste Time'. Chapter six comprises seven essays written about 'A Touch of Tolerance'. A great essay to mention here is 'Straight from the Heart' by Lauren Picker, which was about people's reactions to people who are different, such as a little girl with a hand that had not fully developed in utero and a woman who used a wheelchair. This essay did a remarkable job of pointing out that "minding your language has always been a sign of respect" and "just because a person requires a wheelchair doesn't mean her life is lacking in richness or meaning". Other insightful and thought-provoking essays are 'Sobering Thoughts', 'Political Stomping', and 'The Measure of a Woman'. Chapter seven comprises six essays on the subject of being the 'Life of the Party'. One of the more interesting essays in this chapter is 'Utterly Shameless' by Letitia Baldrige. Its focus is on how "a rude person is often careless and unthinking but is usually too fast-moving to realise just how much she or he has offended others" whereas shameless people "often know full well when they're doing something mean-spirited or overly self-serving". Other distinctive essays are 'Speak Easy' and 'Please Don't Interrupt'. Chapter eight, 'They Also Serve', comprises five essays. The essay I found the most interesting is 'Give Me the Civil Life' by Anne Taylor Flaming. It was about the decline of consideration and kindness people show those who service them on a daily basis, such as cashiers at grocery stores, waiters in restaurants, and so on. Other interesting essays are 'A View from the Fridge' and 'The Forgotten Groom'. The final chapter, chapter nine comprises four essays written on the subject of 'What Grace Does'. The essay that most impressed me from this chapter is 'When Daddy Was King' by Frank Langella, which was about the relationship between a father and his daughter. I found it to be very touching, and I appreciated it even more as a daughter who never had a father. Although the advice in this book is presented in a good-humoured manner that doesn't mean it shouldn't be taken seriously. These simple rules of etiquette are displayed in an amusing way that hopefully opens your eyes to your everyday, easily correctable mistakes, and allows you to have a few good laughs on the way. The colours used in the book's design compliment each other and the font is easy to read. Every chapter page features an entertaining illustration by Chesley McLaren. The book's size is just right to fit inside a small bag or purse, so that it's easily transportable so you can take it anywhere you might find having a book useful. Each essay is about four pages long, told with an insightful sense of

humour that makes the reader feel a bit guilty and sometimes even a little ashamed but also makes us laugh at ourselves whilst learning from our mistakes and how to deal with other people who have yet to discover this treasure of a book. I highly recommend 'Town & Country's Social Graces' to anyone and everyone, not only for the clever advice, but for the humour as well.

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