

# How Not to Be a Dick

The baseline virtue: decency.

Course: COM 101A

Track: Community Lessons

Estimated time: 10 min

Related hymn: Hymn II - How Not to Be a Dick (/hymns/general/hym-02)

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Principle: Decency is not weakness. It is discipline.

Decency is what you do when you're tired, stressed, right, and tempted to be sharp. It is not a personality trait. It is a choice you make in specific moments. What This Lesson Is (And Isn't) - Decency is not pretending you're happy. - Decency is not letting people walk on you. - Decency is not silence. - Decency is keeping your nervous system from turning into someone else's problem. The Failure Mode: Justified Sharpness When stress rises, perspective shrinks. Empathy is often the first thing we drop.

You will feel justified: - "They started it." - "I'm the one doing everything." - "They should know better." - "I'm right."

Those feelings are real, but they are not a license to be cruel. The 10-Second Decency Checklist Before you speak: - Is this necessary? - Is this true? - Is this kind enough to be heard? - Is my tone about the issue, or about my mood?

If you can't answer, delay. (See: The Pause Before You React.) In The Wild (Examples) Cashier made a mistake: - Not decent: "Are you even paying attention?" - Decent: "Hey, I think this rang up twice. Can we fix it?"

Someone cuts you off in traffic: - Not decent: chase, honk, punish. - Decent: create space, reset your breath, move on.

Partner forgets something: - Not decent: "You never listen." - Decent: "I'm frustrated. Can we solve this together?" Scripts (Words That Work) Use short sentences. Don't perform. - "I'm not okay with that. Let's reset." - "I'm heated. Give me a minute." - "I might be wrong. Help me understand." - "That came out sharp. I'm sorry. Let me try again." The Practice (This Week) - Do one small act of generosity each day. - Choose the moment where you feel justified being harsh, and do the decent thing instead. - Apologize quickly when you miss. Reflection (Optional) Where do you excuse being sharp because you're tired? Related Hymn Hymn II - How Not to Be a Dick