Civility in the Workplace and its Impact on Patient Care

PART ONE: Why Civility Matters in a Complex World

Video Summary

Introduction and Personal Background

00:00:00 - 00:02:42

Chris Turner, an emergency medicine physician from Coventry, England, introduces himself. He describes his personal journey, highlighting his Scottish origin and relocation to Birmingham, England. He expresses his initial aversion to public speaking and credits training for his current ability. Turner emphasizes the importance of his message, which focuses on the impact of behavior on performance. He shares his excitement about being in Canada for the first time in 35 years and recounts a memorable cross-country drive from Toronto to Edmonton during his previous visit.

Introduction and Disclosures

00:02:47 - 00:05:11

Chris Turner begins by expressing his gratitude for the invitation and introduces the format of his presentation, which will involve sharing true stories with anonymized details. He clarifies his disclosure, stating that he receives payment for speaking engagements but all his work with Civility Saves Lives is freely available for anyone to use without attribution, even commercially. He emphasizes the importance of open access to this information, particularly in healthcare, and hopes the audience will gain new perspectives and reinforcement of existing beliefs. Turner concludes by sharing a personal reflection on past experiences where he felt diminished by the treatment of others, initially perceiving it as a personal weakness before realizing that it happens to all of us.

Introduction and Speaker's Background

00:05:11 - 00:07:50

Chris Turner begins by addressing the audience, acknowledging potential perceptions of softness in certain work environments. He emphasizes that this isn't a personal failing, but a common experience supported by evidence he will present. Turner's goal is to highlight the importance of listening to others' voices and actively fostering their participation in conversations for better decision-making. He briefly mentions a disclosure, jokingly referring to a hypothetical civility pill developed by a pharmaceutical company and what a cannabis store could offer to help with civility.

Transitioning to his presentation, Turner introduces his first slide, a statement designed to challenge the audience. He explains that the slide's meaning has evolved for him, emphasizing the crucial role of listening to diverse perspectives for optimal decision-making. He outlines the structure of the session, indicating an initial period of him presenting information followed by a Q&A, and underscores the importance of valuing and respecting individuals to encourage their active participation in discussions. He concludes by framing the discussion as being about culture.

Culture and Anecdotes from Medical Training

00:07:50 - 00:10:28

Chris Turner discusses culture in medicine, noting its evolving nature and how not all things get worse. He shares three anecdotes to illustrate this point. The first story recounts an incident during his medical student days where a surgeon, known for being scary, stabbed a senior registrar's hand into the operating table after repeated warnings about the registrar's hand slipping into the surgical field. At the time the reaction from those present was "that'll teach him," highlighting the culture of the time. Turner then mentions his subsequent rotation in obstetrics and gynecology at a peripheral hospital and provides two examples to make the point.

Anecdotes on Changing Cultural Norms in Healthcare

00:10:28 - 00:13:10

Chris Turner shares two anecdotes illustrating the evolution of cultural norms in healthcare. The first involves witnessing a gynecologist suturing drapes to a patient's labia, a practice considered highly inappropriate. Despite recognizing the wrongness, Turner remained silent initially due to the acceptance of others in the room. Later, discussions with senior staff revealed a dismissive attitude, attributing the action to the doctor's individual habits. Teams would argue that "oh no that is just the way he does it – that's just him" and you put up with it, especially as someone junior, even though it feels wrong. The second anecdote recounts Turner's mother's experience during a midwifery attachment where a midwife slapped a woman in labor for screaming. Turner emphasizes that such behaviors would be unacceptable today, highlighting a positive shift in cultural acceptance and the importance of challenging inappropriate practices. This cultural change is driven by collective action and challenging unacceptable behaviors.

Defining Acceptable Conversations in Healthcare

00:13:10 - 00:13:41

Chris Turner discusses the importance of defining acceptable conversations in healthcare. He emphasizes that every interaction shapes what is considered okay and sets the parameters for future discussions. He poses the question of what kind of healthcare world we want to live in and how we should treat people within that world, highlighting the need to determine what is and is not acceptable.

Complexity in Healthcare Delivery

00:13:41 - 00:15:09

Chris Turner transitions to the topic of complexity in healthcare, referencing a talk by David Rook, a management consultant with expertise in ecology. He explains that Rook's insights significantly changed his perspective on healthcare delivery. Turner mentions Rook's work relates to safety and the Stacey Diagram, but plans to present a simplified version using a straight line to illustrate the concept.

Introducing the Certainty-Uncertainty Spectrum

00:15:09 - 00:15:50

Chris Turner introduces a visual representation of certainty about solutions to problems, depicted as a straight line. The line represents a spectrum from high certainty to low certainty. He proceeds to explain the concept further.

Puzzles: Simple vs. Hard

00:15:50 - 00:17:18

Chris Turner discusses the difference between simple and hard puzzles. He uses the example of "2 + 2" as a simple puzzle, where everyone knows the problem and solution. In contrast, trigonometry is presented as a hard puzzle, solvable with the right teacher and effort, but not immediately accessible to everyone. He emphasizes that even after learning, one could solve a series of trigonometry problems independently.

Complicated Problems and Cardiac Arrest Example

00:17:18 - 00:18:43

The discussion shifts to complicated problems. Turner explains that having the necessary skills isn't sufficient for complicated problems due to volume of work or time constraints. He uses cardiac arrest as a healthcare example. While many individuals in the room are capable of performing each task required during a cardiac arrest, the combined effort and coordination of a team are necessary for effective management.

Analogy of Cardiac Arrest and Governance

00:18:43 - 00:19:37

Chris Turner uses the analogy of responding to a cardiac arrest to illustrate the importance of teamwork in governance. He explains that a lone responder cannot effectively manage all the necessary tasks simultaneously, just as a single person cannot handle all aspects of governance. He emphasizes the need for collaboration and a shared understanding of goals in both situations. A cardiac arrest requires multiple people working together, and similarly, effective governance requires teamwork within a department or organization.

Complex Systems and the Syrian War Example

00:19:38 - 00:21:43

Chris Turner introduces the concept of complex systems, referencing David Drew's talk about the Syrian war. He highlights the differing perspectives on solutions in complex situations, noting that these differing viewpoints often stem from conflicting goals. He explains that the diverse and often opposing solutions proposed are a result of people pursuing different outcomes.

Healthcare System Challenges and the Mid-Staffordshire NHS Foundation Trust Case

00:21:43 - 00:24:47

Chris Turner discusses the challenges within healthcare organizations, particularly the tension created by competing priorities. He uses the analogy of a finite box of resources, explaining how efforts to achieve targets (e.g., the four-hour target in emergency departments or 52-week wait targets for operations) can be hampered by the pursuit of other objectives (direction of best patient care). This tension, he argues, leads to judgment, hostility, and even aggression within the system. Turner then introduces the Mid-Staffordshire NHS Foundation Trust case as a prime example of these issues. He explains that in Mid-Staffordshire, hundreds of patients suffered unnecessary harm and death. He, having been the clinical lead for emergency medicine there, emphasizes that the frontline staff (doctors, nurses, AHPs, and most managers) were focused on providing good patient care, while the executives prioritized hitting centrally set targets and meeting financial objectives. This misalignment of priorities, according to Turner, contributed to the tragic outcomes at Mid-Staffordshire.

The Trench Warfare Analogy and its Consequences

00:24:48 - 00:27:43

Chris Turner describes the dysfunctional work environment using a trench warfare analogy, where staff and executives were at odds, leading to patient suffering and

unnecessary deaths. He highlights the damage to staff morale from the organization's negative spotlight. The organization eventually dissolved due to its toxic culture. Turner explains that the executives, despite being good people, were pressured by a flawed system focused solely on financial performance. He recounts being asked twice to stop running cardiac arrests due to minor injuries waiting in the queue, illustrating the skewed priorities and challenging environment.

Credibility in Healthcare and the Importance of Teamwork

00:27:52 - 00:31:03

Chris Turner discusses the importance of teamwork in healthcare, contrasting it with the individualistic nature of exams. He argues that while individual mastery is essential for credibility (being an "exam ninja"), true results in healthcare come from working together in complex situations. He emphasizes that the skills for personal mastery and team mastery are different but not mutually exclusive. Referencing Michael West's concept of compassionate leadership, Turner highlights the difficulty of accepting that if you can't do everything yourself, your primary role becomes enabling others to succeed.

The Importance of Teamwork and Personal Growth

00:31:04 - 00:31:49

Chris Turner discusses the importance of teamwork, emphasizing that the minimum unit of productivity is the team, not the individual. He reflects on his personal journey of transitioning from a focus on individual mastery to embracing teamwork. He notes that this shift took him years to become comfortable with. He then introduces the increasing need for teamwork in his field.

Introduction of Shulie and the Dynamics of Their Relationship

00:31:49 - 00:32:44

Chris introduces his wife, Shulie, who is also an emergency medicine consultant. He describes their interesting conversations and highlights Shulie's senior role as clinical director across multiple departments. Chris explains that he intentionally does not work in the same departments as Shulie, acknowledging her superior intellect and the need for personal agency.

Chris and Shulie's Diverse Backgrounds and Upbringing

00:32:46 - 00:33:50

Chris details the diverse backgrounds and upbringings he and Shulie experienced. He describes himself as a middle-aged consultant from Edinburgh, while Shulie is Welsh and a Bangladeshi Muslim. He mentions being the only non-Muslim in his English

family. Chris contrasts his upbringing in Edinburgh with Shulie's upbringing in the Ronda Valley, Wales, which was once the most deprived area in Europe due to the closure of the mining industry.

Shulie's Upbringing and Diverse Perspectives

00:33:50 - 00:36:38

Chris Turner discusses Shulie's upbringing in the Ronda Valley, highlighting the stark contrast between their backgrounds. He recounts an anecdote about Shulie's father, a GP, whose stolen car was returned with an apology note, emphasizing the community's respect for him and his role in the community. Chris then transitions to the importance of understanding diverse perspectives, particularly when addressing complex issues. He argues against simply imagining another's viewpoint, as unconscious biases can skew perception. Instead, he advocates for directly asking and actively listening to understand how others perceive a situation, emphasizing the crucial role of psychological safety in this process.

Psychological Safety and Disagreement

00:36:38 - 00:39:38

Chris Turner discusses the concept of psychological safety, emphasizing that it's co-created and that is is a relationship, and not individually created or established. He references Victoria Brasile, a professor of simulation, highlighting the growing need for teamwork. Turner then addresses how to handle disagreements, outlining three approaches: fighting to win, avoidance, and a third, listening to understand option. He goes through each in turn.

He describes the seductive nature of "being right" and its association with dominance rather than doing the right thing. He introduces the Thomas Cullen Conflict Inventory as a tool for self-assessment, revealing his own accommodating avoidant conflict style and noting that this is common.

The Difficulty of Compromise and Adapting

00:39:43 - 00:42:21

Chris Turner discusses the challenge of compromise and adaptation, particularly in environments that prioritize being right over understanding. He explains that fighting to win is a common default, but listening to understand is crucial for better outcomes. He illustrates this with an anecdote about medical and surgical registrars encountering a patient. Often, the interaction devolves into a dominance struggle where the goal is to offload the patient, rather than determine the best course of action. This behavior contrasts with the collaborative approach observed when senior staff intervene,

refocusing the discussion on the patient's needs within the context of the organization's resources and limitations. This senior-led discussion invariably results in one team agreeing to take the patient.

The Privilege of Seniority and Information Sharing

00:42:21 - 00:43:03

Chris Turner discusses the privilege senior staff have in patient care, contrasting it with the experience of junior staff. He emphasizes the importance of information sharing for better decision-making, regardless of the context, from global multinational corporations to resuscitation scenarios. He highlights that teams who share more information make better decisions.

Diversity, Profits, and the Pool of Information Analogy

00:43:04 - 00:45:04

Chris Turner links diversity in teams at multinational companies to increased profits, noting a 2% profit increase for every 10% increase in team diversity. He explains that while seemingly small, this is significant given it often involves changing only two team members. He introduces an analogy of an empty swimming pool representing a complex situation. The water in the pool represents the information available, with more water appearing as one approaches the situation. He introduces Professor Joanna Gurrey, a linguistics professor at Warwick University, with whom he collaborated on this concept. He explains how inviting diverse perspectives contributes to a richer pool of information, contrasting this with inviting only those who share similar backgrounds and thought processes. He uses the example of "squat, beard, a middle-aged, Scottish men" to illustrate the limitations of homogenous like-minded groups.

The Importance of Diverse Perspectives

00:45:09 - 00:46:14

Chris Turner discusses the importance of diverse perspectives in gathering information. He uses the analogy of a pool of information, arguing that repeatedly adding the same information results in a "weak broth." He advocates for inviting people with different backgrounds – sex, sexuality, race, religion, and life perspectives – to contribute. However, he cautions against superficial diversity, pointing out that even a diverse group can lack true diversity of thought if they all look and sound likes the same people. He emphasizes the need for diverse professional perspectives, including input from patients, relatives, and communities. This, he argues, leads to richer information and a higher quality of diversity.

The Illusion of Equality, Diversity, and Inclusivity

00:46:16 - 00:47:20

Chris Turner argues that simply fostering this sort of environment represents the "illusion" of equality, diversity, and inclusivity. He explains this using the pool analogy, stating that everyone around the pool has their own "tap of information" and can choose to turn it on or off. The key factor determining whether someone shares their information is whether they feel valued and respected within the group. He emphasizes the importance of civility in professional settings, highlighting the need to make individuals feel seen, recognized, and welcomed as valued members of the team. When people feel valued, they are more likely to contribute their information.

The Power of Information in Resuscitation

00:47:21 - 00:47:47

Chris Turner transitions to discussing the power of information, even in high-pressure situations like resuscitation. He references a 2015 paper by Riskin and Erez on resuscitation teams, which studied simulated neonatal periarrests. He notes the complexity of team dynamics in these situations.

The Importance of Information Sharing and Civility in Teams

00:47:47 - 00:49:30

Chris Turner discusses the importance of information sharing in team success, citing research indicating that it accounts for 40-60% of performance variance. He clarifies that while often labeled "civility," the key factor is in actual information sharing itself. Teams that share information make better decisions and achieve better outcomes. He emphasizes that this is self-evident, as uninformed decisions are inherently flawed. The most significant determinant of information sharing is civility within the team. When team members treat each other respectfully, information flows freely. Conversely, incivility, whether from a team member or even an outside relative, hinders information sharing. High-performing teams and team members prioritize and facilitate this crucial information exchange.

Medical School Culture and Lack of Focus on Civility

00:49:30 - 00:50:39

Chris Turner questions why the importance of civility wasn't emphasized during his medical training in the 1980s. He recalls his experience at Edinburgh Medical School, describing it as a breeding ground for incivility and arrogance. This behavior was not only expected but actively cultivated and subsequently spread. He clarifies that Edinburgh likely wasn't unique in this regard, but it exemplifies the prevailing culture at the time. Throughout his medical training, including his membership in surgery and

emergency medicine, and his six-year fellowship in emergency medicine, the impact of interpersonal treatment was never addressed.

The Impact of Behavior on Performance

00:50:45 - 00:53:40

Chris Turner discusses the impact of behavior, particularly civility, on performance. He highlights the significant increase in research on this topic, noting a surge from 23 papers between 1996-2001 to 1700 papers between 2011-2016, all emphasizing the importance of behavior. He prompts the audience to reflect on experiences of incivility, differentiating between toxic workplaces where screaming and shouting are normalized versus those where such incidents are addressed with concern. Turner focuses on the impact of mild to moderate incivility, describing the feelings of belittlement, shame, humiliation, and powerlessness it evokes, which often precede anger. He explains that these initial feelings can be powerful inhibitors and that the process of making sense of these experiences can take varying lengths of time.

The Wedge of Threat and its Impact

00:53:45 - 00:56:36

Chris Turner discusses the "wedge of threat," explaining how seemingly minor disrespectful behaviors can trigger significant physiological and psychological responses. He describes the spectrum of threat, from imminent physical danger to subtle yet uncomfortable interactions like eye-rolling, interrupting, and unsolicited corrections. These micro-aggressions, while not overtly violent, create a sense of unease and trigger a primal response. Turner explains that this response diverts blood flow from the brain to the body, reducing intellectual capacity by 61%, and orienting thoughts towards hostile reactions. He emphasizes the cumulative effect of these interactions, leading individuals to question the intentions of others and anticipate escalating negativity. This impacts team dynamics as disrespectful behavior diminishes the intellectual capacity of team members.

Impact of Stress on Decision-Making and Team Dynamics

00:56:36 - 00:58:58

Chris Turner discusses the negative impact of stress on decision-making, describing it as a "squeeze of bandwidth" that makes individuals less creative and communicative. This lack of information flow creates a detrimental effect on teams, hindering good decisions. He introduces the concept of "emotional hooking," where a negative interaction occupies one's thoughts, leading to delayed reactions and witty comebacks that surface later. Turner emphasizes how these stressful encounters diminish

intellectual capacity in the moment, preventing individuals from responding effectively. He reflects on colleagues who exhibit similar behavior, diminishing their teams, and suggests that this conduct often stems from learned behaviors rather than deliberate intent, citing upbringing and environmental influences as contributing factors.

Impact of Incivility and Importance of Empathy in Healthcare

00:58:58 - 01:01:48

Chris Turner discusses the impact of incivility in the workplace, noting that people often unconsciously role-model negative behaviors they've witnessed. Simply addressing these behaviors can lead to positive change, as individuals become more self-aware. He highlights research indicating that witnessing incivility, even when not directed at oneself, can reduce cognitive ability by 20%. This impact is not uniform, however, and is more pronounced in individuals with higher levels of empathy. Turner emphasizes the importance of empathy, particularly in healthcare, describing it as a key component of compassion. He explains that compassionate care is linked to improved patient outcomes, including compliance, wound healing, and pain management, citing the book "Compassionomics" as a resource on the topic.

Compassionate Nursing Care and Its Impact on Pain Management

01:01:48 - 01:02:36

Chris Turner discusses a study where patients undergoing major abdominal operations were randomized to receive either standard or explicitly compassionate nursing care. The compassionate care group received 40 seconds more care, but post-operatively used 50% less opiates in their Patient-Controlled Analgesia (PCA). This is attributed to the innate human response of feeling less pain when feeling cared for. He emphasizes the importance of this care for both children and adults, especially during times of pain.

Impact of Treatment on Patient Behavior and the Contagion of Incivility

01:02:36 - 01:04:24

Chris Turner highlights the impact of treatment on patient behavior, citing the example of "frequent flyers" in emergency medicine. Treating these patients well resulted in a one-third reduction in return visits, contrasting with the ineffective practice of punitive measures like stomach pumping. He then shifts to discuss the contagious nature of incivility, referencing a scenario where witnessing an uncivil interaction between himself and someone else would make an observer 50% less likely to help someone in need. This "contagion" thankfully applies to positive interactions as well.

The Impact of Authority on Behavior

01:04:25 - 01:04:43

Chris Turner points out that bosses and those in positions of authority are statistically more likely to be uncivil and cites research by Paul Pith and Dr. Keltner. He explains that bosses are three times more likely to be distracted by their phones or computers during meetings and three times more likely to interrupt others.

The Alien Landscape of Stepping into a New Leadership Role

01:04:43 - 01:07:08

Chris Turner discusses how people change after becoming bosses, often resorting to raising their voices. He argues that this isn't due to a sense of entitlement, but rather the "alien landscape" of a new leadership role. This new level involves unfamiliar tasks like governance, business cases, and accountability, leading to impostor syndrome and discomfort. To feel grounded, new bosses often revert to command and control, even dipping back into their old jobs, which can be perceived as micromanagement by their teams. This behavior, while a coping mechanism for the boss's discomfort, is counterproductive in complex situations, according to Michael West's work. Turner emphasizes that wise leaders eventually move beyond command and control to a different leadership style.

The Development of Wisdom and Asking Not Telling

01:07:14 - 01:09:56

Chris Turner discusses the development of wisdom, contrasting medical students' initial perception of wisdom as knowing facts with senior professionals' view of wisdom as the pursuit of sound decision-making based on gathering diverse opinions. He uses Donald Trump's self- proclaimed intelligence as an example of the opposite of wisdom, highlighting the importance of seeking advice. Turner emphasizes the importance of asking, not telling, in leadership, suggesting phrasing questions to elicit thoughtful responses rather than immediate reactions. He proposes asking "Can I get the benefit of your wisdom on this?" to encourage deeper consideration, arguing that synthesizing the best information from others leads to better decisions.

Personal Anecdote and Healthcare History

01:09:56 - 01:12:28

Chris Turner shares a personal anecdote about his mother, a nurse who trained with her friends Julie and Charlotte in 1959 at the Western General Hospital in Edinburgh. He reflects on their enduring bond formed through their shared experiences in healthcare. Turner mentions Julie and Charlotte's passing, but notes his 85-year-old mother is still alive. He then transitions to discussing healthcare practices in 1959, specifically the

then-common practice of patients smoking in hospital beds and even having ashtrays built into their bedside cabinets. He recalls how doctors at the time even recommended smoking for nerves, highlighting the stark contrast between past and present medical understanding.

Chris Turner's Anecdote on Trust and Behavior Change

01:12:29 - 01:14:47

Chris Turner shares an anecdote about his mother's smoking habits and how it shaped his understanding of trust and information. He recounts how his mother used to flick cigarette butts into the garden, claiming it was "good for the plants," a belief he internalized until much later in life. Turner connects this anecdote to the broader theme of how behaviors, like smoking, can be influenced and changed over time, citing the decline in smoking rates since the discovery of its health risks. He emphasizes the importance of understanding the impact of behavior on others, advocating for civility and respectful interactions within teams to improve outcomes for patients, staff, and organizations, concluding that "civility saves lives."