

Civility

By Jeffrey M. Baill, Yost & Baill, LLP



By the time this article is published, the 2016 Presidential election will be over. What I hope does not last is the lack of civility that was too often displayed during the campaign. The fact that the candidates were under an enormous amount of pressure certainly contributed to the discord. The distasteful images that were so present made me think about the pressures that exist in our profession and how we respond to them.

The CSR Designation requires compliance with the Canons of the code of professional ethics of Certified Subrogation Recovery Professionals. The Canons include two sections requiring professionalism, ethical conduct, and honesty. It is easy to require professional conduct. In practice, the goal can be harder to reach. One great example of a philosopher teaching me how to deal with stress in a positive manner comes from the world of sports.

Recently, an icon in Minnesota tennis history passed away. Steve Wilkinson created an amazing place called Tennis and Life camps, in addition to many other ventures. The "Life" part of the camps (for both children and adults) focused on living a positive lifestyle. Steve used tennis as a metaphor for life. He often discussed how people should respond to tense situations. His message was that you cannot control what your opponent does; however, you do have total control over your response. If you feel your opponent is making bad line calls, you can respond in a negative fashion, or take the high road and behave in a more professional way than your adversary. At the

end of the day, you win when you follow that approach, no matter what the score is. I think that is another way of defining professionalism.

When people on the other side of claims we are working on refuse to respond, or refuse to use logic in analyzing a claim, or are just plain rude, we can control one thing; that is, how we respond to such inappropriate adversity. Stooping to the level of the other side serves no real purpose other than to demean our own character. We can always strive to be the better person. That is always within our control.

You may wonder whether people who do not act in a professional manner get away with their bad conduct and even profit by it. That may happen on occasion, but my experience tells me that at the end of the day, their conduct always comes back to hurt them. The most precious thing we have is our reputation. The old saying is that it takes a lifetime to create a good reputation and only a minute to destroy it. Having a bad reputation for professionalism in this business is a very difficult burden to overcome. It will hurt you and your company over time. Civility is not only a laudatory goal to try and achieve, it is also in your financial interest to do so. In my experience, people who demonstrate a high degree of integrity are the ones who advance in their respective companies and have successful careers.

Jeffrey M. Baill is the Managing Partner of Yost & Baill, LLP, and the Founder and Past President of the National Association of Subrogation Professionals (NASP)