

Twitter Thread by visakan veerasamy



visakan veerasamy
@visakanv



There is an art to replying and commenting, and probably like 60-70% of people I've seen on the internet fail at it. The important thing is not to speak your mind, but to "support" the OP. You can support them by disagreeing well & you can "mis-support" them by agreeing stupidly

Every "utterance" (status, tweet, whatever) is a bit of an invitation, a bit of a proposal. "Let's play this game". When strangers read the proposal accurately, and support the game, a shared understanding develops. You can make friends this way.

Some people deliberately choose to ignore, misread, disregard or denounce other people's bids. Others are outright clueless and don't know how to play, and sometimes cluelessness leads to worse bungling than deliberate malice (JJ's razor) <https://t.co/MC09cW3bCM>

"The intentionality of an agent with behavior sufficiently indistinguishable from malice, is irrelevant." (JJ's razor > Hanlon's \U0001f609.) [@cr1901](#)

— JJ \u300c\u03b9\u03b9\u01b6\u03b5\u0273\u0192\u03b9\u03b5\u300d \U0001f3f4\u200d\u2620\u2013 (@CTZN5) [June 6, 2016](#)

I was a lot more belligerent and disagreeable when I was younger, in part because I simplistically thought playing other people's games was a sheep-like way to live. Why should I support other people's dumb games? Why not mock them instead? It's easy, and intoxicating

I learned that you rarely build anything worthwhile that way. The "best" case scenario: you win over other disagreeable people. A few years of this & it becomes the world you live in – surrounded by other belligerent assholes who don't know or care how to play nice. A cursed life

We can't choose where we are born, or our family, and our initial set of friends is heavily influenced by happenstance. But we can choose who we want to be associated with subsequently. All problems are interpersonal problems, but we kind of get to choose which ones we want

Many different lines of enquiry have led me to this same conviction:

The best guiding question in life is, "Who do you want to share this life with?"

Everything else can be determined from this question. Your ethics, beliefs, actions, habits...

<https://t.co/BVZYdJ9vyS>

Circling back: why even bother with the pain of defeat when you can avoid it? You never signed up for life

I think it boils down to the company. Do you want to be around people who are running from the pain, or towards it?

My ethics is derived from my desire for good peers

— visakan veerasamy (@visakanv) June 7, 2018

Francis Bacon, Of Discourse

- don't be tedious
- let other people talk
- if someone is hogging, cut him off
- ask questions that people can look good answering
- don't be a poser with smartass questions
- don't bitch about others
- eloquence is overrated
- It's Not About You

SOME, in their discourse, desire rather commendation of wit, in being able to hold all arguments, than of judgment, in discerning what is true; as if it were a praise, to know what might be said, and not, what should be thought. Some have certain common places, and themes, wherein they are good and want variety; which kind of poverty is for the most part tedious, and when it is once perceived, ridiculous. The honorablest part of talk, is to give the occasion; and again to moderate, and pass to somewhat else; for then a man leads the dance. It is good, in discourse and speech of conversation, to vary and intermingle speech of the present occasion, with arguments, tales with reasons, asking of questions, with telling of opinions, and jest with earnest: for it is a dull thing to tire, and, as we say now, to jade, any thing too far. As for jest, there be certain things, which ought to be privileged from it; namely, religion, matters of state, great persons, any man's present business of importance, and any case that deserveth pity. Yet there be some, that think their wits have been asleep, except they dart out somewhat that is piquant, and to the quick. That is a vein which would be bridled:

Parce, puer, stimulis, et fortius utere loris.

George Washington:

1. Respect others
13. If your friend has lice, remove it privately
38. When visiting the sick, don't play physician
41. "Undertake not to teach your equal in the art himself professes"
46. Take all admonition thankfully
49. Use no reproachful language

George Washington's **Rules of Civility & Decent Behavior** IN COMPANY AND CONVERSATION

By age sixteen, Washington had copied out by hand, 110 *Rules of Civility & Decent Behavior in Company and Conversation*. They are based on a set of rules composed by French Jesuits in 1595. Presumably they were copied out as part of an exercise in penmanship assigned by young Washington's schoolmaster. The first English translation of the French rules appeared in 1640, and are ascribed to Francis Hawkins the twelve-year-old son of a doctor.

Today many, if not all of these rules, sound a little fussy if not downright silly. It would be easy to dismiss them as outdated and appropriate to a time of powdered wigs and quills, but they reflect a focus that is increasingly difficult to find. The rules have in common a focus on other people rather than the narrow focus of our own self-interests that we find so prevalent today. Fussy or not, they represent more than just manners. They are the small sacrifices that we should all be willing to make for the good of all and the sake of living together.

These rules proclaim our respect for others and in turn give us the gift of self-respect and heightened self-esteem.

50. "Be not hasty to believe flying reports to the disparagement of any"

56. Associate with quality people

- 58. No malice or envy
- 61. Don't intimidate the ignorant
- 62. Don't ruin the mood; if someone else does, fix it
- 64. Don't laugh at others' misfortune
- 66. Be courteous
- 68. Give not advice without being asked
- 70. Reprehend not the imperfection of others
- 71. Gaze not on the blemishes of others and ask not how they came
- 73. Think before you speak
- 74. When another speaks, be attentive and do not interrupt



- 79. Don't relate news if you don't know the truth
- 80. Be not tedious in discourse
- 81. Be not curious to know the affairs of others
- 86. In disputes, be not desirous to overcome; give liberty to each to deliver his opinion
- 105. Be not angry at the table whatever happens



Relatedly: <https://t.co/Tmq2pK8dug>

Reason for this little thread is that many otherwise competent people don't seem to get how to play twitter, going for the win-in-one-move mic-drop interaction, rather than playing along to find the most satisfying banter chain.

— Venkatesh Rao (@vgr) [August 25, 2018](#)

examples of cruel (or incompetent) vs nourishing <https://t.co/aURE61b1mR>

Noobs: You made a mistake, haha, gotcha! I win, you lose! Suck it, sucker!

Friends: Was that a mistake? It's interesting how we both things wrong in distinct ways, that reveal our underlying assumptions and allow us to come to a better understanding of ourselves. I appreciate u

— visakan veerasamy (@visakanv) [July 22, 2018](#)

IMHO this is an example of good reply game (contrast it with all the other replies) <https://t.co/PIIGcdrSV9>

An interesting corollary to this that @jiggityk once pointed out: everything that is good & valuable *becomes* obvious on hindsight. Eg it took decades before anybody put wheels on luggage. But *now* it seems obvious. It seems obvious *because* the value is so apparent

— visakan veerasamy (@visakanv) [March 15, 2019](#)

On good reply game when pitching reads to people. If you want us to prioritize your bid over everything else competing for our attention, you have to sell us on it <https://t.co/37QxzZVaAX>

Everytime I tweet non-trivial thoughts, I get a flood of links/pointers to work by others that people think I ought to be familiar with/connect to.

I appreciate it, but without specific hooks I'll likely ignore it. If I followed all such leads I'd get no thinking of my own done.

— Venkatesh Rao (@vgr) [August 3, 2019](#)

Never mass-message people with some spammy "buy my book" message. Not only is it selfish and annoying, your odds of success are terrible. Everybody loses <https://t.co/D2b1q19OVd>

This is a great example of the sort of lazy sales and marketing people do when they think they are being #hustlers.

It's like going around pushing at 1,000 doors marked pull then patting yourself on the back.

All you did was annoy everybody <https://t.co/To75jflkHQ>

— visakan veerasamy (@visakanv) [January 29, 2019](#)

<https://t.co/G616HEs2JK>

Oscar Wilde, on bad reply game:

"A bore is someone who deprives you of solitude without providing you with company."

— visakan veerasamy (@visakanv) [April 20, 2020](#)

good classic thread about bad reply game <https://t.co/mvYe0COUbt>

Here's something I've been studying on here for a bit. A lot of men, seem to have been conditioned to think that telling someone that you disagree is the same as asking them a question. Like the way they learn to engage is by *creating a conflict*.

— Marco Rogers (@polotek) [May 22, 2019](#)

good reply game <https://t.co/R56Lz0cdsG>

Five years ago, I had a Creative Writing professor who responded to our bad stories the same way: he would never say, "This is wrong." He would say, "How can we make this work?"

From then on, that's how I've viewed critique. Never kill an idea. Help it become its best self.

— Emil Hofileña (@EmilHofilena) [March 3, 2018](#)

Benjamin Franklin's rules of bad reply game, 1750

Rules for Making Oneself a Disagreeable Companion³

Printed in *The Pennsylvania Gazette*, November 15, 1750.

RULES, by the Observation of which, a Man of Wit and Learning may nevertheless make himself a *disagreeable* Companion.

Your Business is to *shine*; therefore you must by all means prevent the shining of others, for their Brightness may make yours the less distinguish'd. To this End,

1. If possible engross the whole Discourse; and when other Matter fails, talk much of your-self, your Education, your Knowledge, your Circumstances, your Successes in Business, your Victories in Disputes, your own wise Sayings and Observations on particular Occasions, &c. &c. &c.

2. If when you are out of Breath, one of the Company should seize the Opportunity of saying something; watch his Words, and, if possible, find somewhat either in his Sentiment or Expression, immediately to contradict and raise a Dispute upon. Rather than fail, criticise even his Grammar.

3. If another should be saying an indisputably good Thing; either give no Attention to it; or interrupt him; or draw away the Attention of others; or, if you can guess what he would be at, be quick and say it before him; or, if he gets it said, and you perceive the Company pleas'd with it, own it to be a good Thing, and withal remark that it had been said by Bacon, Locke, Bayle, or some other eminent Writer: thus you deprive him of the Reputation he might have gain'd by it, and gain some yourself, as you hereby show your great Reading and Memory.

4. When modest Men have been thus treated by you a few times, they will chuse ever after to be silent in your Company; then you may shine on without Fear of a Rival; rallying them at the same time for their Dullness, which will be to you a new Fund of Wit.

Thus you will be sure to please *yourself*. The polite Man aims at pleasing *others*, but you shall go beyond him even in that. A Man can be present only in one Company, but may at the same time be absent in twenty. He can please only where he *is*, you wherever you are *not*.

On making good recommendations: <https://t.co/uJTHRLtw3N>

Let's say there's something you really really like, a book or movie or tv show or podcast or even just another twitter account

And you don't think enough other people are appreciating it

So you wanna fix that

This is an advice thread on how to write an effective rec tweet

— Gretchen McCulloch (@GretchenAMcC) [February 22, 2020](#)