Miss Manners Rescues Civilization: From Sexual Harassment, Frivolous Lawsuits, Dissing and Other Lapses in Civility by Judith Martin

From Miss Manners, the long-time oracle on matters of etiquette and social relationships, here is a contemporary guide to being civilized in the modern world, based on her replies to real letters from readers of her celebrated syndicated newspaper column. Although some of her advice has an old-fashioned ring to it--she favors politeness, school uniforms and careful courtship, and rather disapproves of too much television--she can handle herself on very up-to-date problems like date rape and online etiquette. For problems from the trivial to the life-shattering, Miss Manners has answers that are rarely superficial, and usually fun.

My Personal Review:
Judith Martin is self-assured, gentle, and almost always right, even on the most emotionally-wrought subjects (flag-burning, date-rape, and the ever distressing fork-use issue). Best of all, she is a brilliant writer, with a clear, wry, and unashamedly intelligent voice.

This book offers a philosophical, as well as a practical treatment of etiquette in a time when the law has taken over much of what used to be etiquette's realm--by her convincing argument, to no-one's benefit. Perhaps the only known example of a socially charming libertarian, she calmly notes that the *right* to do something doesn't mean it's acceptable, and that our society's penchant for outlawing rude behavior may be causing fatal confusion on this point.

While it is tempting to read only to be shocked and amused by accounts of how terribly behaved other people are, there are lessons there for all of us... yes, even me.
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