LEARN ABOUT DIVERSITY

Speaking Up Against Bias and Prejudice

Nearly everyone has experienced a time when they wished they would have said something in response to someone's stereotypes or racial/ethnic slur. We are often afraid to speak up because we're worried about damaging our relationship, uncertain about the person's intention, or uncertain about our own perception ("Did I just hear that? Maybe I'm overreacting.")

Intentional or not though, words hurt and not speaking up just sends the message that the behavior is 'normal' and okay. We need to speak up in a responsible way.

Spotting Bias and Prejudice

Bias and prejudice often take many different forms—from subtle remarks to threats and violence.

**Insensitive remarks**
*Examples:*
"Can I touch your hair?"
"That's so ghetto."
"Your English is so good!"
"But you don't look Native American."

**Belittling jokes**
Jokes that poke fun at an individual or group's race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, disability, religion, nationality, age, socioeconomic class, political affiliation, or physical appearance.

**Non-inclusive language**
Language that ignores the presence of groups of people.
*Example:*
Using "policeman" instead of "police officer."

**Stereotyping**
An over-generalization about a group.
*Examples:*
"Mexicans are lazy."

**Ridiculing**
Making fun of or mocking someone based on the way they look or talk.

**Bullying**
Constantly criticizing, ridiculing, dismissing, or ignoring/ostracizing

**Slurs & Name-calling**
Derogatory terms used to insult individuals or groups based on their race or ethnicity.

**De-humanization**
Talking about (or treating) someone as if they were not a human being.
*Example:*
"She's a dog."

**Vandalism & Desecration**
Writing belittling remarks on or defacing someone else's fliers or posters. Destroying property motivated by hate for another individual or group.
"Muslims are terrorists."
"Women are weak."

**Social avoidance**
Avoiding a person or group based on race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, disability, religion, nationality, age, socioeconomic class, political affiliation, or physical appearance.

**Threats, Rape & Assault**
Some of the most severe forms of bias and prejudice. Violence, verbal or physical, is a criminal offense. ‘Nuf said.

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**How should we speak up?**

**A Note about Threats, Vandalism, Rape, Assault**
If you have experienced threats or have been the victim of vandalism, rape, or assault and need medical or other emergency assistance, call 573-874-7652. You can also submit an anonymous bias incident report. If this does not apply to your situation, continue.

**Step 1: Get Ready!**
**Now or Later?**
Should I speak up right when it happens or wait until the situation is less emotionally charged?

**One-on-One or with Others?**
Does it make sense to confront the person in a group so that I have others to back me up?
Or is it better to talk about it one-on-one over coffee or lunch?

**Step 2: Get Set!**
**Be Respectful**
Address the behavior. Don’t attack the person. Calling someone “racist” or “ignorant” generally isn’t a good way to get them to listen to you.

**Listen First**
Listen for the feelings behind the statement. People often make biased comments when they are feeling frustrated, angry or threatened. Listen first to understand where they’re coming from.

**Step 3: Go!**
Respond in a way that’s comfortable for you, respectful of the other person, and situationally appropriate. Not all of the “I” messages can be helpful in any situation.

“When I heard you say _____, I felt _____ (hurt, uncomfortable, angry) because_____ (it’s important to me that... I think w

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**More Ways to Speak Up**

Adapted from Promoting Diversity and Social Justice (2nd edition) by Diane J. Goodman. © 2011.

**Strategy #1: “The Echo”**
Paraphrase or repeat back what they said
By restating what the other person said, you make sure you understand what they said and it gives the other person the opportunity to reflect on what they said. Tone of voice is important. You’re not trying to ridicule, just trying to understand and clarify.

Strategy #2: “The Questionator”
Ask for more information
This strategy is a great way to help you understand why they said what they said. And again, it gives the person another chance to reflect on what they said. After saying it again, they might realize their statement doesn’t make sense or is unfounded. Being genuine is important. Shaming or using sarcasm can backfire.

Strategy #3: “The Huh?”
Play dumb
Another way to get them to reflect on what they said—especially good for responding to jokes. You can ask them why race, gender, sexual orientation, religion, nationality, disability, etc. is relevant to the story, or ask them to explain the meaning of a specific slur or derogatory term.

Strategy #4: “The Debunker”
Challenge the stereotype
Offer another side of the story by challenging the assumption or stereotype. Use your personal experiences and knowledge to show how the stereotype presented isn’t valid.

Strategy #5: “The Connector”
Highlight commonalities
Comments based on bias and prejudice create an “us vs. them” situation. Highlighting the ways in which the person making the comment is the same as the subject of the comments can help dial down the “otherness.”

**Strategy #6: “The Emoter”**
**Express your feelings**
Tell the person how you feel and why and then offer a more appropriate alternative.

**Strategy #7: “The ‘I’ve been there’”**
**Share your own process**
Without sounding self-righteous, talk about how you used to think the same but you’ve changed. Explain what made you change your views.

**Strategy #8: “The One-Worder”**
**Say Ouch**
Sometimes when the comment is directed at you personally you want to respond immediately but can’t think of a good response. Saying “ouch!” can stop the person making the comment and lets them know that what they said was hurtful. It’s a safe, simple strategy that can work well in casual, peer-to-peer situations.

**Oops! What if I realize I’ve said something wrong or hurtful?**
Everyone has, at one time or another, made a comment rooted in bias or prejudice. Here are a few things you can do if you have said something:

- Apologize to those you may have hurt with your comment.
- Use it as an opportunity to learn why others found your comment hurtful or wrong.

[Image: Speak Up! bulletin board kit]

Download the Speak Up! bulletin board kit here.