

MAKE IT AWKWARD

Handouts for
Workshop
Participants

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MAKE IT AWKWARD STRATEGIES to point out discrimination WITHOUT expending excessive energy or creating a major diversion. For example, when you have just started working in a new project team, with people you only know a little bit.

Make it explicit.

Rephrasing in a blunt way can make the underlying bias clearer.

"It sounds like you're classifying an entire ethnicity in a derogatory way. Is that what I hear you saying? I'm not sure I know what you mean by 'X.' Could you explain that term?"

Allow the speaker to reconsider.

Give yourself a moment to recover and them an opportunity to review their comment.

"Can you repeat that please?"

Share your own perspective.

If you have a different take on a situation, explain it to the speaker.

"I see it differently."

Interrupt the laughter.

Say why the "joke" offends you, that it feels demeaning and prejudicial. Don't hesitate to keep interrupting with as many additional "no" messages as needed.

"Why does everyone think that's funny?"

Intentionally misinterpret.

Respond as if to an implicit positive intention.

"Yeah, I really like how diverse it is here. You really get people from all over, it's great."

Laugh uproariously.

Respond to a bigoted statement as though it could only have been intended as satire.

Share your feelings.

If the speaker's comment makes you feel hurt or offended, tell them with a clear "I" statement.

"I have a hard time hearing you generalize like that. It makes me feel that you do not have empathy for people with different life experiences."

State values, assert personal boundaries.

Respect and social justice are important values in my life, please show respect for me at least by not telling these 'jokes' when we are together.

"If you chose to do 'x' then I will do 'y'."



EPFL PRACTICE₁

You have just started working in a new project team, with people you only know a little bit. One of them says...

Laura's nice and all, but I'm not really sure if she should be considering a career in politics. She's much too girly for that.

Make It Awkward Tips

Interrupt early. Academic/Corporate culture largely is determined by what is or is not allowed to occur. If people are lax in responding to bigotry, then bigotry prevails. Speak up early and often in order to build a more inclusive environment.

When identifying behavior, avoid labeling, name-calling or the use of loaded terms. Focus on the actions. Describe the behavior; don't label the person.

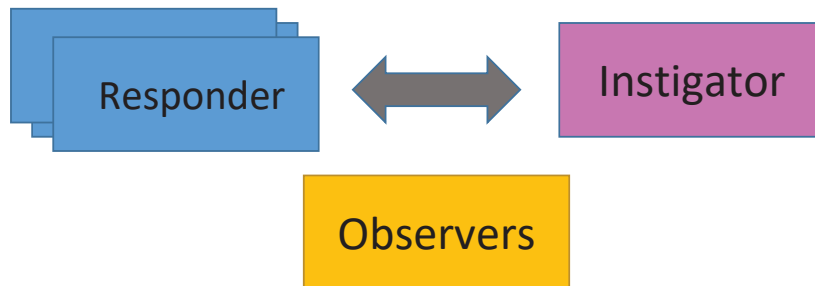
Don't seek to embarrass, punish, or demean the prejudiced person. Respect their human rights as equally-worthy people despite their disrespectful attitude and actions. Attempt to see the prejudiced person as "wounded and ignorant" rather than "bad" or "stupid".

Avoid (useless) logical explanations and defenses to "correct" the prejudiced person or to prove they're "wrong." If you have a personal relationship with the person, you may decide to engage them in a productive discussion at another time. Choose an environment without an audience and when you both have time. Ask if they are willing to have a conversation with you and be sure to really listen their experiences.



EPFL PRACTICE₃ – role play

CONTEXT: You have just started working in a new project team, with people you only know a little bit.



1. Working together in your team breakout room, you will take turns playing the roles of RESPONDER and INSTIGATOR.

EPFL Getting called out yourself

Acknowledge the problem explicitly and take responsibility. **Express appreciation** for their help to see or hear the issues. **State your intention to improve**, which models constructive behaviour for others.

Example: You are right – it does sound like X. Thank you for pointing it out to me, which I know can be difficult. I need to examine my habits and my language, so that I can avoid saying something similar again. Thanks for getting me started.

EPFL References

- 1) *Speak Up or Stay Silent? 5 Reasons to Confront Prejudice*, Sarah Gervais (2013), **Psychology Today**
- 2) *Thinking, fast and slow*, Daniel Kahneman (2011), **Macmillan**
- 3) *White fragility: Why it's so hard for white people to talk about racism*, Robin DiAngelo (2018), **Beacon Press**
- 4) *Deep Diversity: Overcoming us vs. them*, Shakil Choudhury (2015), **Between the lines**
- 5) *Blindspot: Hidden biases of good people*, Mahzarin R. Banaji & Anthony G. Greenwald (2016), **Bantam**
- 6) **Southern Poverty Law Center** <https://www.splcenter.org>

We are happy to share these resources for all non-commercial purposes. If you would like the facilitation outline or more information about how we organise this workshop for different groups, just drop us a note :)

