



Responding to Everyday Bigotry Resource Guide

**Learn four strategies for
interrupting bias and Rutgers
resources to support true
inclusivity**

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RUTGERS

University Equity and Inclusion

STRATEGY #1

Grow a mindset ready for speaking up



It can be helpful to anticipate that we will encounter bias on a regular basis. Faculty, students, postdoctoral researchers and staff at Rutgers who have been historically marginalized are likely to encounter bias more often. Here are some strategies to prepare yourself for these everyday moments.



BE MINDFUL OF YOUR INDIVIDUAL RESPONSIBILITY.

Consider establishing a phrase, mantra, or affirmation as a self-reminder of individual responsibility

(e.g., “I will not let hate have the last word” or “My actions count.”)



ACKNOWLEDGE YOUR INNER DOUBT.

It is normal to feel worried or hesitant when there is a need for someone to speak up. You may be concerned about whether you will say the “right” thing or if your actions will make any difference. The following steps may help you deal with these internal doubts:

- **Recognize and actively change your mindset:** Identify underlying beliefs and the repetitive thoughts that may lead you to be silent. Confronting these beliefs and thoughts will prepare you to address them if they arise in the moment you want to speak up. Remind yourself that every action counts.
- **Get curious and ask questions:** Take these moments to honestly assess your skills and knowledge. Why do you feel limited? In what ways you may need to further prepare yourself for speaking up in such scenarios?
- **Focus on your purpose:** You are not here to argue, to debate, or to prove you are right. Instead your purpose is to stop bias from being silently reinforced and spread.



ANTICIPATE RESISTANCE.

We might encounter resistance from the person who makes the biased statement. Calling out someone’s bias and discriminatory statement may not seem to be immediately effective or may even seem counterproductive. This does not mean our actions to speak up have no implications. You may inspire people to find the courage to speak up for themselves at a later moment. Don’t gauge success solely by whether the person you are addressing changes immediately.¹

¹ Learning for Justice. (2019). SPEAK UP AT SCHOOL A TEACHING TOLERANCE PUBLICATION How to Respond to Everyday Prejudice, Bias and Stereotypes [Brochure]. Southern Poverty Law Center. https://www.learningforjustice.org/sites/default/files/2019-04/TT-Speak-Up-Guide_0.pdf

STRATEGY #2

Speak up! Take action to intervene in daily moments of bias



Daily encounters with biased, stereotypical, or discriminatory comments can happen within a minute, and at the moment we may feel too struck to immediately think of an appropriate response. Therefore, it is important to learn how to effectively intervene during these moments and familiarize ourselves with readymade statements and other intervening protocols.



There are four types of responses that we can use to intervene against bigoted remarks and reinforce inclusivity in the space.²



INTERRUPT.

Interrupting the statement immediately brings awareness to the negative comment and makes explicit that such statements are unacceptable. To call out the bias through interruption, you may say

That is racist/ sexist/etc. That sounded rude and insulting.

Oh wow, I don't see it that way at all.

It surprises me to hear somebody say that.

I'm surprised to hear that kind of statement.

I don't find that funny.



EDUCATE.

Educating students and colleagues about why certain statements are biased, outdated, and not welcomed can create a learning moment for everyone in that space, therefore leading to a long-lasting effect to deepen and broaden the message. The following statements can be used as a starting point to bring in the relevant information.

I don't think this is a word that is used anymore.

We should consider using a different term here, because...

That language is hurtful, and we want to be mindful of our language use because this space is inclusive of all individuals.

I'm sorry I don't know where you got that information from. Here is what I know...

² Learning for Justice. (2019). SPEAK UP AT SCHOOL A TEACHING TOLERANCE PUBLICATION How to Respond to Everyday Prejudice, Bias and Stereotypes [Brochure]. Southern Poverty Law Center. https://www.learningforjustice.org/sites/default/files/2019-04/TT-Speak-Up-Guide_0.pdf



CHALLENGE. Following-up with a simple question can help the person who makes the bigoted statement move toward a deeper understanding of why their remarks are offensive. Let the speaker encounter their own blind spots and potential ignorance and tease out the reasons behind it. The following questions allow you to challenge bias and open up a dialogue respectfully.

I want to make sure I understand you correctly. Can you elaborate on that viewpoint?

Can you tell me more about what you mean by that?

It sounds like you are saying ... Is that what you meant?

Can you tell me more about what you just said?



ECHO. There may also be wonderful moments when we find other individuals stepping in and speaking up to challenge a biased statement. If that's the case, lending support and echoing their actions can significantly enhance an inclusive community and motivate more individuals to speak up across situations.⁵

I have to agree with [person]!

[Person] is correct. That is not an appropriate comment to make.

Thank you [person] for pointing that out. I really appreciate you speaking up.

Well said [person]!

⁵ University of Michigan . (n.d.). Guidelines for discussing difficult or high-stakes topics. Center for Research on Learning & Teaching. Retrieved from <https://crlt.umich.edu/publinks/generalguidelines>



HOW TO DEAL WITH THE UNEXPECTED? In other moments there might not be a direct expression of bias or discrimination, instead a controversial issue was raised unexpectedly. The following steps may be considered when you encounter such situations.

- **In the classroom, acknowledge the student who raised the issue while noting that students may vary in their responses. In a work meeting,** acknowledge the colleague who raised the issue and state that you know others may have different perspectives.
- **Decide whether you are ready and willing to engage with the topic right away** and quickly assess whether the students in class or colleagues in the meeting would like to spend time sharing views about the topic.
- **Follow-up.** Do not ignore the need for different perspectives to be raised whether in the classroom or in a meeting. If students or colleagues want to have a dialogue, and you want to wait on it, schedule a discussion for a later date or set up a mechanism for folks to share (like a feedback form). In class, suggest ways that students could prepare for the dialogue.
- **Summarize.** It is very important to save time to conclude the class/meeting by summarizing the main points of the discussion. Students are more likely to feel that a discussion was valuable if the instructor, with the help of the class, synthesizes what has been shared or identifies the key issues explored. Summarizing the main points of a meeting will ensure that colleagues have a shared understanding.



WHAT IF OUR OWN IDENTITIES ARE INVOLVED?⁵ Discussing an issue pertinent to ongoing social justice issues can involve our personal identities. Students and colleagues may make assumptions based on our appearance, through interaction, or because of an experience we've shared.

- **To handle statements that trigger emotional responses,** draw on techniques that will allow you to step back and gain perspective (e.g., naming the triggering issue, giving oneself time by asking students to do a brief writing exercise, working with the class/colleagues to reframe or contextualize the triggering statement). If you need to let such a moment pass by, it is important to find time later to talk through the experience and to address the triggering issue.

** Be mindful of your tone. Maintaining a calm and thoughtful tone can help center the attention back on the issue itself. There is no need to shame or humiliate the other person.*

⁵ University of Michigan . (n.d.). Guidelines for discussing difficult or high-stakes topics. Center for Research on Learning & Teaching. Retrieved from <https://crlt.umich.edu/publinks/generalguidelines>

STRATEGY #3

Prepare your students for daily moments of bias



Our responsibility within a higher education setting goes beyond our own actions. We can prepare our students to collaboratively create and sustain an environment in which everyone feels safe, supported, and encouraged to express their views and concerns, within and beyond the classroom or the university.



SET UP GROUND RULES FOR ENGAGEMENT that promote an inclusive and safe environment for your classroom, office, lab or other settings. Ground rules should be explicit, set clear boundaries, and establish a shared expectation for everyone's behavior. Engage collaboratively in setting up these ground rules and set them up early in the academic year. Be aware that folks will need to be reminded periodically of the rules throughout the semester, especially if their behavior suggests that they are ignoring them. You may take the following examples as a reference to create your own rules.⁶



Be courteous. Don't interrupt or engage in private conversations while others are speaking.

Challenge or critique the idea, not the person.

Listen carefully and respectfully to what others are saying even when you disagree with what is being said. Comments that you make (asking for clarification, sharing critiques, expanding on a point, etc.) should reflect that you have paid attention to the speaker's comments.

Commit to learning, not debating. Comment in order to share information, not to persuade.

Respect others' rights to hold opinions and beliefs that differ from your own.

Avoid assumptions about any member of the class or generalizations about social groups. Do not ask individuals to speak for their (perceived) social group.

Allow everyone the chance to talk. If you have much to say, try to hold back a bit; if you are hesitant to speak, look for opportunities to contribute to the discussion.

Remember that it is OK to disagree with each other. Let's agree to disagree. The purpose of dialogue and discussion is not to reach a consensus, nor to convince each other of different viewpoints. Rather, the purpose of dialogue in the classroom is to reach higher levels of learning by examining different viewpoints and opinions.

Support your statements. Use evidence and provide a rationale for your points.

If you are offended by something or think someone else might be, speak up and don't leave it for someone else to have to respond to it.

** If you have ground rules and they have been broken, you and others can immediately refer back to the specific ground rule to get the conversation back on track. If the situation warrants (i.e., someone habitually breaks the same rule), you may want to check in with them immediately after the meeting/class. You can also consider debriefing with class/colleagues about the incident in the following meeting/class. If the incidence is serious enough (e.g. harassment and bullying) to be reported, please follow through with the university or campus reporting protocols.*

⁶ University of Michigan. (n.d.). Guidelines for classroom interactions. Center for Research on Learning & Teaching. Retrieved from <https://crlt.umich.edu/examples-discussion-guidelines>



RAISE AWARENESS AND PROVIDE A SAFE SPACE FOR PROCESSING when biased perspectives are expressed in the classroom. If possible, discuss why some words and opinions hurt and inform students about historical, psychological, literary, and other contexts.

- Tie slurs or pejorative remarks to classroom lessons whenever possible, **making historical context in or out of your area of expertise relevant and meaningful.**⁷ For example, *We want to be mindful of how we talk about slavery. To call someone a slave de-emphasizes their personhood. Instead we can describe those who were held against their will in bondage as “enslaved people.” Enslaved people is a term that emphasizes the humanity of a population denied human rights throughout history.*
- **Begin the discussion with clear, open-ended, but bounded, questions that encourage discussion.**⁸ Avoid “double-barreled questions” which pose two problems simultaneously, or “hide the ball” questions that search for a specific answer. Ask questions that prompt multiple answers rather than short factual responses or simple “yes” or “no” replies.
- **Prepare specific questions** to use if the class is silent or hesitant about speaking. *What makes this hard to discuss? What needs to be clarified at this point?”*
- **Encourage students to elaborate** upon their comments where needed. With probing questions, students are prompted to share more specific information, clarify an idea, elaborate on a point, or provide further explanation.
- **Be a listener** for students who raise concerns about others’ bigoted statements or the classroom materials. If necessary, offer them an individual space (e.g. office hours) to check in for their feelings and feedback.

⁷ Learning for Justice. (2019). SPEAK UP AT SCHOOL A TEACHING TOLERANCE PUBLICATION How to Respond to Everyday Prejudice, Bias and Stereotypes [Brochure]. Southern Poverty Law Center. https://www.learningforjustice.org/sites/default/files/2019-04/TT-Speak-Up-Guide_0.pdf

⁸ University of Michigan . (n.d.). Guidelines for discussing difficult or high-stakes topics. Center for Research on Learning & Teaching. Retrieved from <https://crlt.umich.edu/publinks/generalguidelines>



DIVERSIFY GROUP WORK AND DISCUSSION to increase students' opportunities to connect and collaborate with people from backgrounds different than theirs. Collaborative projects and discussions can facilitate students' interactions and exchange of opinions, but students may be inclined to self-select into homogeneous groups where they may not be able to effectively practice inclusivity and critical thinking. Consider following strategies to bring students from different races, ethnicities, abilities, socioeconomic, and other type backgrounds to work together.

- **Randomize group rather than making students self-select into groups.**
- **Design assignments that require different types of skills so people with different skill sets and backgrounds can all contribute.**
- **Incorporate a collaborative reflection section for students to share how their backgrounds may be connected to the assignment or course content.**
- **Think-Pair-Share: Give students a few minutes to respond to a question individually in writing. Divide the class into pairs. Instruct the students to share their responses with group members. Provide students with explicit directions, such as "Tell each other why you wrote what you did." After a specified time period, have the class reconvene in order to debrief. You can ask for comments on how much their pairs of views coincided or differed, or ask what questions remain after their paired discussion.**
- **Go Around: Give each student an opportunity to respond to a guiding question without interruption or comments. Provide students with the option to pass. After the round, discuss the responses.**



MODEL AND REINFORCE MINDFUL USE OF LANGUAGE. Our frequent and proper use of inclusive language can guide students and colleagues to incorporate similar practices into their daily life. For example, using gender-neutral language when referring to groups of people. These are some guidelines and additional resources on inclusive language use in higher education settings.

- The [American Psychological Association provides a guideline](#) for inclusive language that encompasses general terms related to equity and power, distinguishes person-first versus identity-first language, and defines a list of **identity-related terms** for a more mindful selection of language use.
- [The following presentation](#), hosted by Rutgers University-New Brunswick's Center for Social Justice Education and LGBT Communities⁹, describes how and why certain words can unintentionally perpetuate microaggressions.
- [Dr. Vanessa Gonlin from the University of Georgia provides a glossary](#) on **race/ethnicity-based terms** and explains how and why to use certain terms when referring to different racial/ethnic identities and groups

⁹ Rutgers Student Affairs. (2017). Language matters campaign. The Center for Social Justice Education and LGBT Communities. Retrieved from <http://socialjustice.rutgers.edu/safer-space-training-program/language-matters-campaign/>



INTRODUCE UNIVERSITY PROTOCOLS for students to safely report bias and discrimination incidents, which allow the University to further investigate and respond to biased acts. You can put the bias reporting information on your course Canvas page or website, syllabus, course materials, and other types of media, as well as mentioning it to students.

- **For Faculty and Staff:** Rutgers University-wide formal discrimination and harassment reporting form: [Complaint Form](#)
- **For Students:** Campus-specific formal reporting form for bias and discriminatory incident
 - [Camden](#)
 - [Newark](#)
 - [New Brunswick](#)
 - Title IX online complaint filing for discrimination based on sex/gender: [Title IX online form](#)
- **Rutgers University Policies:**
 - Policy against Discrimination, Harassment, and Related Interpersonal Violence: [University Policy 60.1.12](#)
 - Code of Student Conduct: [University Code of Student Conduct \(2020\)](#)
 - Equal Employment Opportunity and Affirmative Action: [University Policy 60.1.8](#)
 - Religious Accommodations: [Religious Accommodations](#)
 - Bias Prevention: Bias Prevention – [Division of Student Affairs](#)
- **Additional Resources:**
 - Avenue for graduate students or faculty who are unable to resolve problems using the pathways provided by their department or other Rutgers office: [Rutgers SGS Problem Resolution](#)

STRATEGY #4

Power Matters. How to Speak Up from and to Authority



Oftentimes, we are interacting with someone who holds more or less power than ourselves at work. Folks may be hesitant to speak up to those who have more power than themselves. Here are some tips and strategies for speaking up that attend to power differentials.



WHEN WE ARE SPEAKING FROM A POSITION OF AUTHORITY:

Your actions matter. If as a powerful person you do not speak up, you are reinforcing that the classroom/department/unit is a place where biased comments are permissible.

- **Be willing to publicly address our mistakes.** We all have our own blindspots and, therefore, can make mistakes. But these mistakes can be turned into learning opportunities. Authority figures who are willing to apologize for their mistakes and acknowledge the effort from students and subordinates to report their honest feelings can significantly strengthen the overall openness and inclusivity of the space. The **Re-Aact strategy**¹⁰ is a simple method of apologizing when we are made aware of our mistakes or bias.

<p>RE = REFLECT:</p> <p>Reflect on the situation and listen to people if they indicate you have hurt someone or a group of people.</p>	<p>A=ACKNOWLEDGE</p> <p>Acknowledge and accept responsibility for your actions.</p>	<p>A=APOLOGIZE</p> <p>Say you are sorry. It doesn't really matter what you intended. If you have made a mistake or violated someone else's dignity, you simply need to address the impact of your actions on the other person.</p>
<p>C = CHANGE YOUR BEHAVIOR</p> <p>Share exactly what you will do in the future to avoid such a mistake. Recognize that your apology is just the beginning.</p>	<p>T = THANK</p> <p>Thank the person for sharing the new information and for being willing to speak up.</p>	

- **Do not accept silent responses from your audience.** When we address the biased statements from a position of authority, it can be hard to gauge whether the listener genuinely understands or simply is unwilling to talk back. If the response is silence, don't assume that your message has sunk in. Watch closely to see if behaviors change, and be ready to speak up again—and again—if needed. If possible, invite your audience to share some reactions and thoughts to deepen their reflections on the subject.



WHEN WE ARE SPEAKING TO OUR COLLEAGUES:

In the office space or faculty lounges, more casual and insensitive conversations can happen there, but the communication channels are also more open to help your colleagues realize the impact of their biased comments. **Do speak up. Don't antagonize. Do keep your eye on the goal.**¹¹

¹⁰ University of Michigan Student Life. (n.d.). How to Apologize: Re-Aact. The Program on Intergroup Relations. Retrieved from <https://igr.umich.edu/IGR-Insight-Handouts>

¹¹ Southern Poverty Law Center. (n.d.). Speak Up! At Work. Learning for Justice. Retrieved from <https://www.learningforjustice.org/magazine/publications/speak-up/at-work>



- **Acknowledge your concerns from your perspective.** When you try to deliver a message, start with how you feel about the biased statement instead of shifting the center to that person too quickly. Then, tell more about the “how” and “why” to deepen your colleagues’ understanding of the issue - How did you learn about this issue? Why do you think that statement is not appropriate?

Example: “You know, I’ve come to learn that” ... “I stopped using that word because it can perpetuate the misunderstanding that”... “I realize that these words can be really hurtful for those who...”

- **When there are bigoted “jokes”, interrupt the laughter.** Meet a bigoted “joke” with silence, and maybe a raised eyebrow. Use body language to communicate your distaste for bigoted “humor.”

Interrupt by saying; “Why does everyone think that’s funny?” Tell your co-workers why the “joke” offends you, and that it feels demeaning and prejudicial. And don’t hesitate to interrupt a “joke” with as many additional “no” messages as needed.

- **Go up the ladder, when necessary:** If the behavior persists, take your concerns to the department chair, program director or your supervisor. Find allies in upper management, and call on them to help create and maintain an office environment free of bias and bigotry.
- **Find your allies:** Like-minded colleagues also may form an alliance and then ask the colleague or supervisor to change his or her tone or behavior.



WHEN WE ARE SPEAKING TO AUTHORITY:

Think through: How can I help the person in authority absorb the message before we directly confront it?

- **Should I write down my issue, and present it in the form of a letter or memo?** Would that avoid an initial face-to-face confrontation that could get ugly, allowing the person in authority to absorb the message before we speak about it? Should I seek an ally or allies? Am I jumping over a level of authority (e.g., going to the dean before speaking with the department chair), and will that lead to problems later?



A companion guidebook to help to learn informative strategies to speak up across settings, at work, at home, with family and friends, etc.: <https://www.learningforjustice.org/magazine/publications/speak-up>.

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