

Strategies for Responding to Bias

Challenging Bias

(When you hear, experience or witness something sexist, homophobic, racist, ableist or otherwise oppressive.)

1. **Breathe.**
Take a deep breath. It takes some courage and presence to be ready to challenge bias and oppression because you know you will create discomfort, even if the person you are interrupting or others in the room may appreciate or benefit from it in the long run.
2. **Name It.**
Name the bias (or oppression) the comment or action perpetuates. Tell them exactly what they just did and name the oppression they contributed to. For example, “What you just said was transphobic.”
3. **Give Information.**
This may include how the comment is oppressive or how it makes you feel. Tell them why it was offensive and/or oppressive. For example, “When you don’t respect a person’s request for their chosen pronoun, you are playing into the idea that people must fit into only two binary genders with no room for self definition. You are not respecting how they identify, regardless of the way you see them.”
4. **Give A Direction.**
Tell the person what they can do instead or what should they remedy or never do again. For example, “You should always use the pronouns people ask you to use. I have a great article about a boy whose school kept insisting he was a girl. I can lend it to you or we could talk about it over coffee tomorrow.”

Accepting a Challenge

(When someone tells you that you did something sexist, homophobic, racist, ableist or otherwise oppressive.)

1. **Breathe.**
Take a deep breath. Ask a question only to clarify, not to argue.
2. **Listen Carefully.**
Understand what it was that you said or did that they are trying to call your attention to.
3. **Thank Them.**
Do this genuinely. Remember it probably wasn’t easy or comfortable for them to tell you that something you said or did was biased or oppressive.
4. **Take Action.**
This may take some reflection first, do what you can: apologize, help change a policy, better educate yourself, or go away and think further about what was said.

