

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.



Identifying Bias

The following statements have been shared by University students as examples of when they've experienced microaggressions. Read the following statements and decide if it is based on race, gender, sex, age, disability, sexual orientation, religion, class or a combination. Write your answer on the line.

I get it: I'm totally OCD about my files!

I was biking through town when two women yelled "Konichiwa."
I'm Vietnamese and I was born in California.

For this class you're required to visit four art galleries. The entrance
Fees vary but I'm sure you can afford it.

"Smile!" says middle-aged man to me, a college-aged female barista
behind the bar. I've only ever heard male customers instructing my
female coworkers this way.

You have Asperger Syndrome? But you seem so normal.

How much money would you put on the Boston bombers being Muslim?

"I would like for Anthony to share *her* stories related to *her* life as a
young woman growing up in NYC." Anthony shared in class that *his*
pronouns are *he*, *him* and *his*.

When are you going to have some kids? You're not getting any younger?

Anyone want to hear a good joke? Okay, well there was a Mormon,
a Mexican and an Indian...

Don't be lame! That party was so gay!

For this project I want you to think about a romantic relationship you've
had with members of the opposite sex and write about your observations.

"Stop crying and acting like a little girl!" My sister said to her 4 year old
son, who has a twin sister.

You're all invited to my house for dinner tonight. Ali, I know it's Ramadan,
but I hope you'll join us anyway.

My mom says she is okay with me being bisexual but doesn't want me
to tell anyone else in case I change my mind. I'm 15 years old.

My black friends say: "You aren't really black; you act like a white girl."
My white friends say: "You aren't really white though, you're like, dark."

Today we are having a debate on immigration. I know the three Latino
students will want to argue in favor of immigration.

