



Toolkit for Navigating Difficult Conversations Related to Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Anti-Racism

Overview

The following toolkit is a guide for navigating conversations about diversity, equity, inclusion, and race in various contexts and a tool to reference when engaging in these discussions.

Getting Started: How to use this toolkit

- For those who are getting started and hoping to expand their knowledge, particularly about race, the [Antiracism Resource List](#) is a great place to begin.
- For those who are beginning to have conversations with family, friends, colleagues, or community members about various topics related to social justice, the [Navigating Difficult Conversations Guide](#) can be a helpful resource as you prepare for, engage in, and debrief these conversations.
- For those who may be in a leadership role (facilitator, instructor, student leader, etc.), the [Responsive Dialogues Guiding Principles](#) section of this toolkit provides guidance for those leading conversations amongst already intact groups.

Table of Contents

[Antiracism Education Resource List](#) **2**

This collated list provides selected resources including articles, videos, podcasts, books, and guides about racism and oppression, primarily in the context of the United States.

[Responsive Dialogues Guiding Principles](#) **8**

The goal of this document is to provide an outline for leading a micro dialogue or conversation that addresses high stakes, potentially sensitive topics.

[Navigating Difficult Conversations: Tips and Strategies](#) **15**

This document provides an outline of common challenges, strategies, and resources to keep in mind when navigating through challenging conversations.



Antiracism Education Resource List

This collated list provides selected resources including articles, videos, podcasts, books, and guides about histories of racism and oppression, primarily in the United States. These resources are meant to enhance opportunities for individuals and groups to provide further enrichment and education on anti-racism. **[Note:** This list is not exhaustive and will be updated periodically.]

Anti-racism work requires sustained, proactive education and engagement as well as systemic, intentional efforts at micro- and macro-levels. We encourage you to use this resource in tandem with other resources available across NYU and other personal and professional networks.

Getting Started

Articles

- [The Combahee River Collective Statement](#)
- ["White Privilege: Unpacking the Invisible Knapsack": Peggy McIntosh](#)

Books

- [Black Feminist Thought: Patricia Hill Collins](#)
- [The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the Age of Colorblindness: Michelle Alexander](#)

Videos

- ["The Urgency of Intersectionality": Kimberlé Crenshaw](#)

Addressing Race & Racism

Books

- [Race: Are We So Different?: Alan H. Goodman, Yolanda T. Moses, and Joseph L. Jones](#)
- [Race Matters: Cornel West](#)
- [So You Want to Talk About Race: Ijeoma Oluo](#)
- [The Person You Mean To Be: How Good People Fight Bias: Dolly Chugh](#)

Podcasts

- [Momentum: A Race Forward Podcast](#)
- [Pod For The Cause: The Leadership Conference on Civil & Human Rights](#)
- [Pod Save the People: Crooked Media](#)

Videos

- ["Color Blind or Color Brave?": Mellody Hobson](#)

**Guides**

- ["Becoming Anti-Racist: Being a better advisor, lab mate, and friend to Black colleagues": Angeline Dukes, Elena Dominguez, and Dr. Autumn Ivy](#)
- [COVID-19 Resource: Ascend Pan-Asian Leaders](#)
- ["Talking About Race: Being Antiracist": Smithsonian National Museum of African American History and Culture"](#)
- ["Upstanding Against Racism": Diversity Best Practices](#)

Black Feminist Theory, Identity & Intersectionality**Articles**

- [Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex: A Black Feminist Critique of Antidiscrimination Doctrine, Feminist Theory and Antiracist Politics: Kimberlé Crenshaw](#)
- [The Combahee River Collective Statement](#)

Books

- [Black Feminist Thought: Patricia Hill Collins](#)
- [Eloquent Rage: A Black Feminist Discovers Her Superpower: Brittney Cooper](#)
- [Heavy: An American Memoir: Kiese Laymon](#)
- [How Does it Feel to be a Problem? Being Young and Arab in America: Moustafa Bayoumi](#)
- [I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings: Maya Angelou](#)
- [Making Multiracials: State, Family, and Market in the Redrawing of the Color Line: Kimberly McClain DaCosta](#)
- [No Ashes in the Fire: Darnell Moore](#)
- [Redefining Realness: Janet Mock](#)
- [Sister Outsider: Audre Lorde](#)
- [The Bluest Eye: Toni Morrison](#)
- [The Fire This Time: Jesmyn Ward](#)
- [The Source of Self-Regard: Toni Morrison](#)
- [Their Eyes Were Watching God: Zora Neale Hurston](#)
- [This Bridge Called My Back: Writings by Radical Women of Color: Cherrie Moraga and Gloria Anzaldúa](#)



- [*Unapologetic: A Black, Queer, and Feminist Mandate for Radical Movements*: Charlene Carruthers](#)

Podcasts

- [*Intersectionality Matters!*: Kimberlé Crenshaw](#)

Higher Education

Articles

- ["A Supreme Triumph, Then Into the Shadows": Lloyd L. Gaines](#)
- ["Beyond the Margins: Meeting the Needs of Underserved Students": American Council on Education](#)
- ["Five Things Student Affairs Administrators Can Do to Improve Success Among College Men of Color": Shaun R. Harper](#)
- ["How Higher Ed Can Fight Racism: 'Speak Up When It's Hard" Chronicle of Higher Education](#)
- ["Pushing Back Against Racism and Xenophobia on Campuses": Inside Higher Ed](#)
- ["Speaking Truth and Acting with Integrity: Confronting Challenges of Campus Racial Climate": Adrianna Kezar and Sharon Fries-Britt](#)
- ["Race, Class, & College Access: Achieving Diversity in a Shifting Legal Landscape": Lorelle L. Espinosa, Matthew N. Gaertner, and Gary Orfield](#)
- ["We Can't Ignore This Issue': How to Talk With Students About Racism": Chronicle of Higher Education](#)

Videos

- ["We Need to Talk About Race in Higher Education": American Council on Education](#)

Institutional Racism & Oppression

Articles

- ["Identifying Discrimination at Work: The Use of Field Experiments" Devah Pager and Bruce Western](#)



- ["Levels of Racism: A Theoretic Framework and a Gardener's Tale": Camara Phyllis Jones](#)

Books

- [Evicted: Matthew Desmond](#)
- [For Discrimination: Randall Kennedy](#)
- [The Color of Law: Richard Rothstein](#)
- [The Fire Next Time: James Baldwin](#)
- [The Warmth of Other Suns: Isabel Wilkerson](#)
- [When Affirmative Action Was White: An Untold History of Racial Inequality in Twentieth-Century America: Ira Katznelson](#)

Videos

- ["American Son": Christopher Demos-Brown \(Available on Netflix\)](#)
- ["How Do We Span the Racial Wealth Gap?": William A. Darity Jr](#)

Policing, Mass Incarceration, & Racial Violence**Articles**

- ["On the Frustration Behind the George Floyd Protests": Bryan Stevenson](#)
- ["We Charge Genocide" William L. Patterson](#)

Books

- [Just Mercy: Bryan Stevenson](#)
- [Between the World and Me: Ta-Nehisi Coates](#)
- [Have Black Lives Ever Mattered?: Mumia Abu-Jamal](#)
- [Policing the Black Man: Angela Davis](#)
- [The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the Age of Colorblindness: Michelle Alexander](#)
- [When They Call You a Terrorist: A Black Lives Matter Memoir: Patrisse Khan-Cullors and Asha Bandele](#)

Videos

- ["LA92": Daniel Lindsay and T.J. Martin \(Available on Netflix\)](#)
- ["Seven Seconds": Veena Sud \(Available on Netflix\)](#)
- ["When They See Us": Ava DuVernay \(Available on Netflix\)](#)

Racism Within a Global Historical Context

**Articles**

- ["A History of Race and Racism in America, in 24 Chapters": Ibram X. Kendi](#)
- [Civil Rights History Project: Library of Congress](#)
- [The 1619 Project: The New York Times Magazine](#)
- ["The Case for Reparations": Ta-Nehisi Coates](#)

Books

- [An African-American and Latinx History of the United States: Paul Ortiz](#)
- [An Indigenous Peoples' History of the United States: Roxane Dunbar-Ortiz](#)
- [Brazil: Mixture or Massacre: Essays in the Genocide of a Black People: Abdias do Nascimento](#)
- [The Souls of Black Folk: W.E.B. Du Bois](#)
- [Discourse on Colonialism: Aime Cesaire](#)
- [The Autobiography of Malcolm X: Malcom X and Alex Haley](#)

Podcasts

- [1619: New York Times](#)

Videos

- [Seeing White: Seen or Radio](#)

Whiteness & White Privilege**Articles**

- ["The Twilight of Ethnicity Among Americans of European Ancestry: The Case of Italians": Richard Alba](#)
- ["The White Space": Elijah Anderson](#)
- ["White Fragility": Robin DiAngelo](#)
- ["White Privilege: Unpacking the Invisible Knapsack"](#)
- ["Whiteness as Property": Cheryl Harris](#)

Books

- [Black Skin, White Masks: Frantz Fanon](#)
- [Me and White Supremacy: Layla F. Saad](#)
- [Race Talk and the Conspiracy of Silence: Understanding and Facilitating Difficult Dialogues on Race: Derald Wing Sue](#)
- [White Rage: The Unspoken Truth of Our Racial Divide: Carol Anderson](#)



NYU

Global Inclusion, Diversity,
and Strategic Innovation

- [*White Fragility: Why It's So Hard for White People to Talk About Racism: Robin DiAngelo*](#)
- [*Privilege, Power, and Difference: Allan G. Johnson*](#)

Podcasts

- [*Seeing White: Seen or Radio*](#)



Responsive Dialogues Guiding Principles

Overview

The goal of this document is to provide an outline and best practices for leading a micro dialogue or conversation that addresses high stakes, potentially sensitive topics. This document is by no means exhaustive nor should be substituted for intentional facilitation training; good facilitation is not easy and requires extensive training, practice, and commitment. This is a guide with best practices for those who seek to convene groups and lead conversations mostly with intact groups (e.g. student organizations, affinity groups, staff meetings). Ideally, any conversation of this type is led by a skilled facilitator but we understand that leaders may be called upon to quickly address the needs of their community and hopefully the questions presented and resources offered will provide a baseline for embarking upon these conversations in a thoughtful manner.

This guide is primarily for short conversations (60 - 90 minutes). This is **not** for conflict mediation. The dialogue being convened should potentially provide space for participants to:

- Process charged / concerning incident(s) - i.e. racism, xenophobia, sexism, homophobia, transphobia, ableism, acts of violence and brutality
- Be in community together
 - Process and reflect areas of concerns and issues under consideration
 - Engage in constructive guided dialogue
 - Agreement may be an outcome, but not the primary intention as this often requires different competencies and structures for engagement; exposure to differing opinions, ideas will likely occur during dialogues
 - Identify strategies (individual, collective, institutional) for moving forward individually, and as a collective/group/cohort

Given the current physical limitations on gathering, the guidance in this document will focus on virtual engagement and assume that the reader is the one initiating or convening the dialogue.

Preparation and Inquiry

Rushing to create a dialogue or conversation without proper assessment and planning can be harmful and counter to the goals of gathering.

If you are asked to lead a dialogue with a group, please engage in an intake process or initial conversation with point people from the group to understand the needs and expectations of the group:



- How did the group come to be and what leadership or power structures exist now?
Historically?
 - Is the group composed of students, staff/administrators, scholars. Is this an affinity group? Cohort based collective?
 - Is there a president, leader, etc? Formal or informal leadership? Elected or appointed officials? What is the current status of the leadership?
 - Are there any identity-based power dynamics within the group that would be important to be mindful of (e.g., senior leaders in the unit are predominantly white and front-line staff are people of color)?
- How is information coming forward or being disseminated?
- What is the sense of urgency, level of “upsetness,” or reach of concern? Will this dialogue address impact in the short-term, medium-term, long-term?
- What needs, concerns, or ideas, if anything, have been expressed by the group? By individuals?
- Have all perspectives on the incident(s) been heard? How might additional information be gathered to include those perspectives?
- What interventions have been tried already? Many leaders may have tried to address things internally and having that information in advance is important.
- What and how have dialogue goals been established and communicated to all who will participate in the dialogue?
 - Have you confirmed that participants understand the dialogue goals and there is buy-in?
 - What will be the follow up to ensure alignment and communication and feedback loops are transparent?
 - It is important to confirm if the dialogue is mandated or not. Mandated dialogue may pose challenges to having group buy-in without proper framing.
- Did the incident or issue involve members of the group? If so, what has been the follow up? What are the next steps?
 - If there is a disciplinary issue, members of the group may expect an update on the status of that action - are you prepared to engage that conversation?
- Are the issues raised local, national, or global? Are they escalating or dormant?
 - What education and framing may need to take place before convening?
- What have some suggested next steps, or actions been thus far? What are some additional suggestions? Are these suggestions based on individual or communal action and response?



Pre-Convening the Dialogue

Prior to the dialogue or conversation the organizers should meet to discuss all aspects of the dialogue. Setting expectations, establishing structure, and identifying roles in advance are helpful and necessary. In this meeting the person(s) requesting the dialogue and potential facilitator(s) should discuss all aspects of the dialogue including but not limited to:

- Expectation Setting
 - Think through the various aspects of the gathering including what the gathering will or won't do (i.e. may be a forum to express feelings but not a debate to argue perspectives).
- Structure
 - Where and when will this take place? Is the setting appropriate for the type of dialogue you're going to have, and how might you need to adapt to make the environment conducive to your goals?
 - Make certain that the convening platform is accessible for all participants
 - Who will be invited?
 - A secure Zoom room or other type of meeting space is recommended
 - Establish how you will facilitate/guide the dialogue
 - Will it be a formal program or open conversation?
 - How will you prepare and what guiding questions will you use?
 - Engagement
 - Will people be called on to speak one at a time?
 - If using Zoom will you ask people to use the "raising hand" feature?
 - Will you pre-establish speaking time and give participants a limit with the aim of maximizing participation?
 - Who will assume the responsibility of maintaining the structure of the dialogue, including time management and monitoring any community agreements?
 - Additionally, send out the agenda in advance so that participants can prepare or opt out if they are not ready to engage.
 - Determine if there will be notes or any other kind of document generated as a result of the dialogue. Keep in mind that documentation and recording may limit or minimize engagement and vulnerability. If you are recording establish:
 - Who will have access to the recording and how will it be distributed?
 - How will privacy be maintained?
 - Where will it be stored? For how long and access privileges?
- How will the dialogue come to a close; and what resources, if any, should be provided? What will be communicated about what can take place next and what will not?



Facilitation

Facilitating dialogues is a skill and can be challenging in even the most positive of circumstances. Significant advance planning and preparation are critical factors in successful dialogue spaces where participants can feel engaged, heard, and even challenged. Determine if you have the emotional capacity to facilitate the conversation and hold space for ALL participants. Depending on the topic or group you may want to seek out a co-facilitator that is internal or external to the group who can offer additional support and can offer parity in identities represented in those facilitating the content. Additionally, think through the identities of the facilitators and how that might impact the dialogue.

Below are a few roles to consider when establishing the dialogue:

- **Convener** - Person to open the gathering and review the intention of the gathering
- **Facilitator** - Person who can establish the group agreements and maintain the flow of the conversation.
 - Should be comfortable with the topic, able to reinforce the agreements, name issues or concerns that arise, pause and restart the gathering as needed
 - May have to do homework/research to prepare for dialogue and understand historical and contemporary contexts
 - Can be a member of the group or external but should introduce themselves and clarify their role in the gathering
 - Is able to deal with difficult and challenging discussion moments; can refocus and redirect people and conversation when necessary; will hold people accountable for actions and statements
- **Closer** - Person to bring the gathering to a close
 - Check in with all participants to gauge how they feel and what support may be needed going forward
 - Thank and acknowledge the participants
 - Offer resources or share any further engagement opportunities

Guiding questions for the conversation:

- What events and issues have brought this group together for this conversation?
- What are you hoping to reflect on together in this space?
- What kind of emotions are people experiencing? How do we engage emotions and drive toward action in advancing diversity, equity, and inclusion?
- What more would be helpful as you continue to process and identify action steps?
- What actions and/or outcomes would be ideal; what is doable; how will you contribute?
- What will our next steps be, individually? Collectively? Suggestions for community or expanding the dialogues?

Keep in mind that throughout the gathering the facilitator may need to remind folks to take time and space; some participants may demonstrate emotions such as anger, frustration, immense sadness. Balance acknowledging an individual's emotions to show care for the person but do



not make them the center of the gathering. Having this sentiment expressed in the group agreements can help people self-manage throughout the conversation.

Topic-Specific Considerations

As you think about convening conversations about some of the specific topics listed below, it is essential to acknowledge that related incidents are not new nor do they occur in a vacuum. It is important to situate the conversation within a historical context and name that there are communities who experience compounding intersectional realities that make them susceptible to experiencing multiple experiences outlined below (e.g. trans people of color). Ideally the facilitator will keep these points in mind and offer guidance as needed but not present them as a lecture or training. This list is by no means exhaustive but instead a few helpful prompts to be mindful of when engaging in these conversations.

Additionally, throughout the conversations it will be important to continue to ground participants in their experiences and their individual impact and responsibilities while still engaging with a broader conversation about what these issues mean for larger communities.

- Racism
 - How does this action show up in our systems, structures, and in what ways embedded in common practices? What is the impact on individuals and broadly across varying communities?
 - What are the specifics of racism as it pertains to specific groups -- Similarities in applications? Differences in applications?
 - How do we both address the idea of and push against notions of “reverse racism”
 - How do we address central issues such as power and inequity?
 - Move away from good vs. bad dichotomies
- Brutality; State and Institutional Violence
 - Explore how people and spaces are patrolled, policed, and monitored - historically? What is happening in the contemporary moment?
 - What does justice look like? How can liberatory practices be utilized in communities? How do we think beyond punishment and create spaces for people to re-enter into communities being held accountable for actions, yet without fear of being punished/isolated for harm they have caused in the past?
 - Think beyond individual actors and examine the systems and structures that create disparities within communities
- LGBTQ+ Related Discrimination (Transphobia and Homophobia)
 - What is cissexism and heterosexism? How are they connected to transphobia and homophobia?



- In what ways do the intersectional experiences of LGBTQ+ communities create greater vulnerabilities and threats of discrimination and bias for trans and queer people of color, femme queer/trans folks, LGBTQ+ disabled communities, LGBTQ+ immigrants, etc.?
- How can we protect LGBTQ+ folks who are in the process of coming out as LGBTQ+? What are the barriers to coming out for LGBTQ+ people? How are experiences of coming out made more complex by the intersections of other identities?
- How do we uphold gender binaries in our everyday language, practices, policies, and systems? How can we undo these?
- **Disability and Accessibility**
 - How to move away from additive efforts and toward universal design?
 - How have disruptions (i.e. Covid-19) revealed opportunities and new potential standards for engagement?
 - Include conversations about the diversity (across spectrum and include those with hidden disabilities and neuro-diverse members) within our NYU community
- **Immigration**
 - Move the conversation beyond the DREAM Act as this potentially sets up a good vs. bad immigrant conversation
 - How have historical acts of exclusion framed conversations about immigration and citizenship (who has rights, what rights?)
 - Avoid “we are all immigrants” as that erases Native American and Indigenous people as well as people brought to locations as slaves
- **Solidarity**
 - How do we center the experiences of the community?
 - How does erasure continue to marginalize people?
 - How do we utilize our privilege to be in solidarity with groups?
 - How will we educate ourselves about pertinent issues, including issues of power, equity, and privilege?
 - What are tangible and sustainable practices that can endure beyond a “moment?” How can one be proactive?
 - How will we hold ourselves accountable in proactively doing the work of advancing diversity, equity, and inclusion within our spheres of influence?

Follow-Up

In closing the session, it's important to check in with all of the participants for a quick reflection to gauge how they felt and name support that may be needed. Post gathering, check in with your contact. Has the group expressed ongoing concerns? Did new issues arise? Did it go well?



A follow up conversation is important and reiterates to the community that we are invested in them.

Resources

NYU

- Office of Global Inclusion, Diversity, and Strategic Innovation - [Learning and Development Resources](#)
 - Center for Multicultural Education and Programs
 - LGBTQ+ Center
- [Chaplains' Circle](#)
- Department Social and Cultural Analysis - [Faculty Writings](#)
- [The Disabilities, Inclusion and Accessibility Working Group \(DIA\)](#)
- [Employee Assistance Program - Carebridge](#)
- [Mindful NYU](#)
- [Wellness Exchange](#); 24-hour hotline: (212) 443-9999
- [NYU - Work Life Office](#)

Dialogue and Facilitation

- [The Art of Mindful Facilitation](#)
- Everyday Democracy - [Dialogue Guides](#)
- Group and Community Agreements
 - [Sample Community Agreements](#)
 - [Cultures Connecting, LLC](#)
- [Intergroup Resources](#)
- The Public Conversations Project - [Fostering Dialogue Across Divides](#)
- [University of Michigan Center for Research on Learning and Teaching](#)
- [Vanderbilt University Center for Teaching](#)
- [Sustained Dialogue Institute](#)



Navigating Difficult Conversations: Tips and Strategies

(Adapted from “Kathy Obear’s Navigating Difficult Situations in the Workplace”)

Overview

The goal of this guide is to serve as a tool for navigating conversations around diversity, identity and social justice. This document provides an outline of common challenges, strategies, and resources to keep in mind when navigating through challenging conversations. This guide is by no means exhaustive and is to be used as a starting point in identifying the role you play in navigating difficult conversations.

Preparing for the Conversation

Getting Started: Resources for Navigating Difficult Conversations

[“5 Questions to Help You Know When to Pick Your Battles in Controversial Conversations”](#)
[James St. James](#)

[“6 Strategies Every Feminist Needs for Effective, Change-Making Dialogue”](#) Andrew Hernández

[“Calling In: A Quick Guide on When and How”](#) Sian Ferguson

[“Color Blind or Color Brave”](#) Mellody Hobson

[“Talking About Race: Being Antiracist”](#) The Smithsonian National Museum of African American History and Culture

[“How Telling Someone To Go Educate Themselves Is Complicated”](#) Lee Lai

Preparation

Before beginning a dialogue, it is helpful to consider your goals, intentions, and own readiness to engage in the conversation. You might start by asking yourself the following questions:

- Do I feel emotionally capable to engage in this conversation?
- Does the other person seem open to engage in this conversation?



- What are the potential risks or consequences?
- What is the outcome I am hoping for?

Assess your own comfort level before engaging. This might involve:

- Identifying your own triggers and making a plan for what to do should they come up
- Acknowledging gaps in your knowledge and taking steps to research and educate yourself.
- Identifying your areas of strength and areas in which you need support

Social Location and Positionality

Your social location and positionality will likely impact the level of comfort you are entering into a conversation with. For example, those who hold dominant social identities might experience discomfort related to feelings of guilt about how oppressed people have been treated or fear that they will be accused of perpetuating this oppression. These are important feelings to explore as you continue to expand your understanding of what it means to hold power and/or privilege. (Derald Wing Sue)

Feeling uncomfortable or worried before beginning a conversation is common. However, before deciding not to engage, it is important to think about *why* we might choose to avoid difficult conversations, especially if we hold dominant social identities. By choosing not to engage, are we placing emotional labor on people of marginalized identities to do this work for us? How might we challenge ourselves to lean into the discomfort we are experiencing rather than avoiding it?

Setting Intentions

Below is a guide for shifting towards more constructive intentions before a discussion begins:

Less Constructive	More Constructive
Trying to win someone over Proving the other person wrong Asserting power or authority Trying to make everyone happy or “keeping the peace” Trying to be seen as the “good one” or ally	Reducing harm without reproducing harm Meeting people where they are Interrupting unproductive behaviors Identifying deeper issues behind emotions, words, and behaviors



During the Conversation

It can feel challenging to stay present in a conversation when conflict or disagreement arises. However, effective communication involves an effort to understand where somebody else is coming from, even if you might disagree with them. Strategies include:

- Engaged body language
 - Showing engagement with your body helps to indicate your readiness for conversation and interest in listening to what the other person has to say.
- Active Listening
 - It is easy to fall into the trap of listening to respond rather than listening to understand. Notice when this comes up for you, and challenge yourself to listen without using your own thoughts or ideas as a filter.
- Rephrasing and repeating
 - Before you respond with your thoughts, try repeating back what you have heard the other person say (“What I’m hearing you say is ____.”)

Common Responses

When engaging in difficult conversations you might come across the fight, flight, and freeze responses. These are the body’s natural response to stress or danger. Below we will explore each of these individual responses and how to address them:

FIGHT: You might notice that the you or the person you are speaking with tries to force change, “win” in a conversation, or act dismissive of others’ thoughts and feelings. Below are a few strategies to address the fight response:

- Ask clarifying questions rather than making statements
 - “If you don’t mind, can you say more about that?”
- Model inclusive language as a subtle educating opportunity
 - Responding to “Are you bringing your boyfriend to the event?” with “My partner will be attending”
- Repeat back statements to let someone know you’re hearing them
 - “So I’m hearing you say ____, I can see how that can be frustrating.”

FLIGHT: You might notice that the you or the person you are speaking with is avoidant, seems defensive, or tries to downplay the issue being discussed. Below are a few strategies to address the flight response:



- Start with the impersonal
 - “I’ve been reading some different perspectives on this issue and I have some questions”
- Check your privilege
 - Discern whether you’re feeling uncomfortable and should challenge yourself to have this conversation or whether this conversation may be a space that will be harmful to you or your identities.
- Investigate the root of your discomfort
 - Do you need to do some more research or reading around this issue?
 - Is this discomfort stemming from a past conversation or situation?

FREEZE: You might notice that you or the person you are speaking with blanks out or feels helpless, doesn’t respond, or seems overwhelmed by anxiety or fear. Below are a few strategies to address the fight response:

- Practice having conversations with those you trust and feel more comfortable around
- Name how you’re feeling to communicate how others can help
 - “When you _____, I felt _____ and I would like to _____”

After the Conversation

Taking care

Navigating difficult conversations can sometimes feel exhausting, frustrating, or upsetting. It is essential for us to seek care from within ourselves and our communities to sustain us in our fight for justice and liberation.

- Remember that it is your choice whether or not to engage in the conversation
 - Center self-care and remember that you do not have to dismantle oppression by yourself.
 - It is okay to step away from a conversation that feels overwhelming or triggering.
- Finding community
 - Being in community with other people can be a powerful way to take care of yourself and others.
 - Find friends, colleagues, or family who can act as support and a sounding board while you prepare for or debrief a conversation.
- Self-Reflection
 - Allow yourself the time and space to reflect upon any lingering thoughts or feelings. Strategies such as journaling and mindfulness can be helpful ways to individually process your thoughts.