

Penn Medicine Center for Health Equity Advancement

Starting the Conversation about Race and Racism

Talking Points and Guidance

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Leadership Talking Points

Begin with acknowledging the troubling times and events

- ▶ These events of the endemic racism and police brutality that resulted in the recent murders illustrate how systems continue to fail people of color across our communities
- ▶ What we are witnessing unfold is part of a long-standing and larger set of issues that impacts all systems including our health care system.
- ▶ These discussions are hard but necessary. Today is meant to be a time for our department/unit/team to share how you are feeling, concerns you are having or things you want to see change.
- ▶ We recognize that it may feel hard to share at this time in a group, but we are here if you also want to have a private discussion. Please feel free to reach out at any time.
- ▶ This is the first step toward our department moving toward action and your input is critical to help us move forward.

Then conclude by sharing your reflections and thoughts of how you have been processing recent events.

Avoid These Key Missteps

- ▶ **Keeping silent.** For people not directly impacted by these events, the default response is often silence.
- ▶ **Do not rely** on your Black co-workers or staff to lead these conversations or provide anti-racist education.
- ▶ **Avoid reacting defensively** to comments about practices or situations that occur or have occurred in your department or within your team.
- ▶ **Avoid overgeneralizing.** Avoid statements like: “everybody knows,” how “all of us feel,” and what “none of us would ever do.”
- ▶ **Avoid perpetuating stereotypes.** For example: by complimenting minorities on being “articulate” when they share their experiences or feelings.

Source: [Harvard Business Review, U.S. Businesses Must Take Meaningful Action Against Racism, 2020](#)

Tips for Leading the Conversation

- ▶ Having leadership share experiences and feelings first opens the door for others.
- ▶ If there are others you know who would be willing to share, consider asking them beforehand to speak up.
- ▶ We will not always know the right thing to say or do but it is important to open the conversation.
- ▶ It is ok to show your vulnerability as a leader and acknowledge that you wish to listen, learn, and work together with your team to effect change
- ▶ It is ok to say you wish to ensure you don't say the wrong thing, but realize staying silent is not the solution
- ▶ Explicitly state that you wish to hear how you and/or the organization can improve and allow time for feedback on your remarks
- ▶ Set some ground rules for the chat and the group discussion ahead of time

Explicitly Set Boundaries/Ground Rules

These can be stated at the beginning or emailed to the team ahead of time:

- ▶ Please avoid interrupting individuals speaking or cutting them off
- ▶ Dialogue should be respectful of others at all times
- ▶ Always recognize and affirm individual experiences
- ▶ Please remember that any words or statements spoken will not have any impact on your position
- ▶ Also provide a way for individuals to submit comments anonymously to facilitate honest feedback
- ▶ Practice empathy. Compassion and hearing other points of view are critical to these discussions

Supporting Each Other

- ▶ The trauma of racism is real with significant impact of these events on those that experience microaggressions on a daily basis due to the color of their skin. Allowing individuals the time and space and resources needed to process is important.
- ▶ Make sure staff know where to turn
 - Provide concrete resources (at end of this deck)
- ▶ Consider offering space to check in regularly with the team in this way

Facilitating Discussion and Reflection

Questions to generate discussion:

- ▶ How often do you think about your racial/ethnic identity?
- ▶ What aspect of your racial/ethnic identity makes you the proudest?
- ▶ In what ways does your racial/ethnic identity impact your personal life? Your professional life?
- ▶ Have you ever experienced a situation where your racial or ethnic identity seemed to contribute to a problem or uncomfortable situation?
- ▶ Does racial/ethnic identity enter in your process of making important or daily decisions? If so, how?
- ▶ Have you ever felt “different” in a group setting because of your race/ethnicity? How did this affect you?
- ▶ How often/deeply do you interact with people of a different racial/ethnic identity other than your own? What is the nature of these relationships and interactions?
- ▶ Have you ever witnessed someone being treated unfairly because of their racial/ethnic identity? If so, how did you respond? How did it make you feel?

Source: [W.K Kellog Foundation](#); [National Day of Racial Healing Conversation Guide, 2019](#)

Facilitating Discussion and Reflection

Questions to inform action plans:

- ▶ Have you experienced any barriers to success here related to your racial or ethnic identity?
- ▶ Have you noticed any other obstacles in the way to your success?
- ▶ Is there anything we can do better to facilitate your success and sense of inclusion?
- ▶ In terms of mentorship and promotion, do you sense that those happen without bias?

Source: [Harvard Business Review, How Managers Can Promote Healthy Discussions About Race, 2016](#)

Be Prepared

- ▶ Racial discrimination, tokenism, nepotism, and the sense of isolation are common concerns here at Penn. But if you don't hear, acknowledge, and understand them, you can't do anything about them.
- ▶ You may also hear statements such as "All Lives Matter", "I'm not a racist", "I'm colorblind". Consider how you would respond to these statements.
- ▶ Respond to harmful statements in the moment, not after. Not addressing these in the group creates an unsafe environment for individuals most impacted by racism.
- ▶ Consider how your life and experiences may influence how you respond to or feel about these conversations.

What is a Microaggression?

A microaggression is a statement, action, or incident regarded as an instance of indirect, subtle, or unintentional discrimination against members of a marginalized group such as a racial/ethnic minority.

Combating Microaggressions – Acting in the Moment or Later

You committed a microaggression	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• If you recognize it, apologize (now or later)• If it is pointed out to you, believe the person• Don't get defensive• Learn more about why your action was a microaggression
You witnessed a microaggression	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Interrupt the behavior (e.g. say "ouch"!)• Name the offense• Support the target publicly or privately• Support someone else who is speaking up• Talk privately with the offender later• Amplify ideas or suggestions that are ignored
You received a microaggression	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Choose to speak up or note• Rely on allies• File a complaint• Seek out a community of support

Source: Ashburn-Nardo et al. 2008, Heilman & Haynes 2005; Nelson et al. 2011; Plous 2000; Rattan & Ambady 2014

How to Respond: All Lives Matter

- ▶ While the intention of the phrase "All Lives Matter" may be to put everyone's life on equal footing and convey a sense of unity, it is actually very harmful. That is because it discounts and diminishes the focus on the violence and discrimination Black individuals face every day in this country.
- ▶ There are many metaphors to explain this:
 - Your house is on fire and you ask for help, someone responds "*But all houses matter.*"
 - Your leg is broken and you ask for help, someone responds "*But all legs matter.*"
- ▶ "We say: Black Lives Matter. We never said: Only Black Lives Matter. We Know: All Lives Matter. We just need your help with #BlackLivesMatter because Black lives are in danger"

How to Respond: I am colorblind; I don't see race, I see people

- ▶ “Colorblindness” doesn’t acknowledge the very real ways in which racism has existed and continues to exist, both in individuals and systemically. By professing not to see race, you’re just ignoring racism, not helping solve it.
- ▶ “Colorblindness” also erases experiences of non-white people here in America and the diversity that this brings to our communities and workplaces.
- ▶ Being “colorblind” also robs individuals of a unique aspect of their identity. By projecting “sameness” onto non-white people, we are negating their experiences, traditions and uniqueness.

Source: [The Atlantic, Color-Blindness is Counter Productive, 2015](#)

How to Respond: I'm not racist

- ▶ Saying I'm not racist is denying the larger social context in which all of us are living. It's not about our individual intentions [or biases].
- ▶ This statement equates racism with prejudice. Prejudice is an attitude based on stereotypes. Racism entails the policies, practices, and systems that benefit or privilege white people and disadvantage non-white people or that reinforce ideas that white people are superior and black people are inferior.
- ▶ You may not be racially prejudiced, but that doesn't keep you from engaging in discriminatory behavior or failing to challenge racist practices, policies, or systems.
- ▶ Even if we have the best of intentions, we all live in a society that is set up to benefit some and exclude others and we support such systems and policies with our inaction.
- ▶ Not being racist is not the same as being anti-racist. Being anti-racist means we are proactive in examining and dismantling the policies, practices, and systems at play that create opportunity for some but disenfranchise others.
- ▶ We all have a role in this. Being anti-racist is about acknowledging that our collective *inaction* serves to support inequities in policies, practices and system and only our collective *action* will dismantle those structures.

Source: [National African American History Museum; Being Anti Racist, 2020](#)

How to Respond: My life is hard too; I am not privileged.

- ▶ When we discuss privilege, we specifically mean “white skin privilege”. You can be white and have had struggles and hardships in your life that are very real, however, your skin allows you to bypass certain struggles and experiences that you may not even realize.
- ▶ Privilege is a built-in advantage, one separate from your income, education, or effort.
- ▶ White privilege means moving through the world knowingly or unknowingly benefiting from a system that is set up to meet your needs easier than others
 - [Mortgage loans](#) and [Car Dealers](#)
 - Job Interviews ([Resume Study](#))
- ▶ Privilege because of your skin color means that in our society your identity is “normal” while others are considered “different.”
 - White hair care being in the “hair care” aisle and Black hair care being in the “ethnic hair care” section
 - The “flesh color” of band aids
- ▶ Privilege is the purposeful by-product of systemic racism and is not controlled by any individual.

Source: [Teaching Tolerance; What is White Privilege, Really?](#)

Closing the Discussion

- ▶ Thank everyone for their sharing and participation
- ▶ Affirm that this is the first step
- ▶ Outline what you envision to be the next steps
- ▶ Share ways individuals can follow up with you after this discussion

Conversations About Race & Racism - For Your Team

[home](#) > [in the studio](#) > event



Conversations About Race & Racism - For Your Team

These sessions provide an opportunity for teams to talk about the recent acts of police brutality and racial violence. The goal is to provide safe spaces for open dialogue and develop strategies for moving forward. They are moderated by members of our community trained in Cultural Psychology, Health Equity, and/or the Treatment and Study of Anxiety. If you would like to schedule time to have a moderator support your team in this way, please request a session. We will be in touch to learn more about how we can support you, and your team's availability. Sessions are generally held between 9am and 5pm.

[request a session](#)

Support Resources For Individuals

- ▶ [Immediate Support-Psychiatrist \(PennCobalt\)](#)
- ▶ [Immediate Support-Therapist \(PennCobalt\)](#)
- ▶ [Immediate Support-Coach \(PennCobalt\)](#)
- ▶ [Hotline 24/7 \(BlackLine\)](#)
- ▶ [Penn Medicine Together](#)
- ▶ [Penn Cobalt Resources](#) on racial issues, wellness, and mental health, including talking to children about those topics

Our Contact Information

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