

## TIPS TO FIGHT BIAS AND PREJUDICE

### IN YOUR HOME

#### **Anticipate and Rehearse**

- If you know bias is likely to arise, practice possible responses in front of a mirror beforehand. Decide what makes you feel comfortable. Be confident in your responses.

#### **Speak Up without “Talking back”**

- Repeat information and remove unnecessary racial or ethical descriptions.

#### **Actively Discuss**

- Ask questions to clarify: “Why do you feel that way?” “Are you saying everyone should feel this way?”
- Articulate your view: “You know, Dad, I see this differently. Here’s why.”
- Strive for common ground: “What can we agree on here?”

#### **Describe what is happening**

- Define the offense and describe the pattern of behavior.

#### **Appeal to Family Ties**

- “I want to make sure these jokes don’t damage our relationship.”

### IN GROUP EMAILS

#### **Refuse to Forward**

- Don’t forward the email. Delete it. It’s not quite the same as speaking up, but it’s a good first step in breaking the chain.

#### **Reply to Sender**

- Explain why the e-mail offended you – that you find bigoted language offensive, that the so-called joke wasn’t funny and that stereotypes are unfair, bigoted and harmful. Ask to be removed from any future e-mailings.

#### **Reply to All**

- Do the same thing but hit “reply all,” sharing your thoughts with everyone on the e-mail list. Others then may follow your example. Imagine the powerful statement that would be made if all recipients responded in this way.

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### IN YOUR SOCIAL CIRCLE

#### **Address the Speaker**

- A simple comment can jar someone from their rudeness. “I’m sorry. I’m not sure I know what you mean by ‘white trash.’ Could you explain that term?” When the speaker has to explain their remark, they may begin to understand the inappropriateness of the remark.

#### **Approach Friends as Allies**

- When a friend makes a hurtful comment or poses an offensive question, it’s easy to shut down, put up walls or disengage. Remember that you’re friends with this person for a reason; something special brought you together. Drawing on that bond, explain how the comment offended you.

#### **Respond with Silence**

- When a friend poses a question that feels hurtful, let protracted silence do the work for you. Don’t say anything and wait for the speaker to respond with an open-ended question: “What’s up?” Then describe the comment from your point of view.

#### **Talk about Differences**

- When we have friendships across group lines, it’s natural to focus on what we have in common, rather than our differences. Yet our differences matter.
- Strive to open up the conversation: “We’ve been friends for years, and I value our friendship very much. One thing we’ve never really talked about is my experiences with racism. I’d like to do that now.”

#### **Focus on Behavior, not Beliefs**

- If you feel the need to ask questions about a friend’s behavior that’s changed, center the question on the behavior rather than assumption.

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### AT SCHOOL

#### **Determine the Extent of the Problem**

- As a social science club activity, survey the students about biased language at school: what they hear most often, who they hear it from, how it makes them feel and what they’re willing to do about it.

#### **Start a “Words Hurt” campaign**

- Get students, teachers, counselors and administrators to sponsor an assembly, or a weeklong or yearlong education campaign about the damaging effect of hurtful words.

#### **Support Student Mediators – and use Peer Pressure**

- Train students in conflict resolution techniques, and ask them to work with peers to marginalize the use of biased language.

#### **Teach Tolerance**

- When slurs are exchanged in the classroom, interrupt whatever lesson is being taught, and start a new one on language, respect and cultural sensitivity.

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### **IN YOUR NEIGHBORHOOD**

#### **Assert Neighborly Values**

- “We know you’re new to the neighborhood. Around here, we welcome all kinds of people. And we look out for each other.”

#### **Appeal to Basic Humanity**

- When confronted with a bigoted. “Why did you sell your house to those people?” a simple reply is, “Because they’re people. They want to buy our house, they can buy our house.”

#### **Appeal to Allies or the Neighborhood Association**

- If you’re the target of bigoted conduct and fear for your well-being or safety, let sympathetic neighbors know; ask them to keep an eye (and ear) out for you. Or contact the neighborhood association, which may have policies in place to assist you.

#### **Model Neighborly Behavior**

- Extend a hearty welcome to new neighbors, and honor old neighbors. Help create a neighborhood that values connectedness, rather than exclusion and bias.

#### **Apologize Immediately**

- If you make a joke in poor taste, correct your mistake on the spot: “I’m really sorry. I don’t know what I was thinking. I could make some excuses, but none would make up for telling such a tasteless joke. I hope you accept my apology.”

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### **IN PUBLIC**

#### **Assess your surroundings**

- A heated exchange with a stranger can escalate into physical violence; assess the situation before you respond. Is the speaker with a group of people? Is the space deserted? Are you alone? Are children present? Consider these things before responding.

#### **Say nothing**

- A questioning glance may be an effective and non-confrontational response in a situation in which you feel unsafe speaking directly. Keep moving.

#### **Say something**

- If you choose to raise the issue, state your beliefs clearly: “I find that language very bigoted. It offends me.” Or, “I think it’s wrong to stereotype people.”

#### **Speak for yourself**

- If you’re the target of rude customer service, let the person know: “I deserve to be treated with respect in an establishment where I spend money.” Or, “Please ask me, not my husband, what I need.”

#### **Make eye contact**

- Look at other people witnessing the exchange. Use body language to appeal for their assistance and support.

#### **Step up**

- Don’t allow someone to be mistreated when you have the power to help. Don’t stick solely to “your” issues. Speak up against bigotry whenever it happens, whoever is involved.

#### **Speak to the proprietor**

- If the incident happens in a business, leave. But before you walk out, let the managers know why you’re leaving: “The man at the table next to mine kept using the N-word. It made me lose my appetite. Perhaps you should speak to him so you don’t lose more business.”

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### **AT WORK**

#### **Use or Establish Policies**

- Call upon existing policies to address bigoted language or behavior. Work with your personnel director or human resources department to create new policies and procedures, as needed. Also ask your company to provide anti-bias training.

#### **Interrupt Early**

- Workplace culture largely is determined by what is or isn’t allowed to occur. If people are lax in responding to bigotry, then bigotry prevails.
- Speak up early and often in order to build a more inclusive environment.

#### **Go up the Ladder**

- If behavior persists, take your complaints up the management ladder. Find allies in upper management, and call on them to help create and maintain an office environment free of bias and bigotry.

#### **Band Together**

- Like-minded colleagues also may form an alliance and then ask the colleague or supervisor to change his or her tone or behavior.

#### **Don’t Laugh**

- Meet a bigoted “joke” with silence, and maybe a raised eyebrow. Use body language to communicate your distaste for bigoted “humor.”

#### **Interrupt the Laughter**

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

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