



18+



30 min



2+



You need

## What can you say?



*Explore and practice responses to racist or problematic remarks, build confidence in speaking up, and understand the importance of allyship. Through reflection and discussion, participants will develop practical responses that feel achievable.*



1. Divide participants in smaller groups of 2-5
2. The facilitator hands out a set of cards with scenarios and a reflection card
3. One group member starts by reading out loud one of the scenarios
4. The group discusses possible responses they would feel comfortable saying
5. To ease the process there will be responses on the backside of the card if the group finds it difficult to come up with responses
6. After each scenario the group takes a look at the reflection card and discuss the question in relation to the response
  - a. Is it difficult to respond in this situation? Why?
  - b. Why is it important to respond in this situation?
  - c. What are the potential consequences if people do not respond?

When groups have been through all the scenarios, evaluate the exercise together. The facilitator can ask the participants questions about personal responsibility and allyship to support a more inclusive environment, particularly for those not directly targeted by racism.



If you are in a racialized position and become the target of racist comments or attacks, this exercise is not meant to guide you toward the "right" response. Whatever you choose to do to protect yourself – whether that means speaking out, disengaging, seeking support, or taking other steps – is valid.



**Civil Connections**  
Building robust communities





## Speaking Up Against Racism: A Practical Guide

### Why Speak Up?

When someone says something problematic or racist, it's important to address it.

Speaking up – even simply disagreeing or offering a different view – can interrupt harmful behavior, support those impacted, and help shift attitudes and culture.

### Response Framework

#### 1. Call It Out

Put into words what you see as problematic.

Avoid jumping to conclusions or assuming intent – focus on what was said or done. Examples:

- “That comment didn't sit right with me.”
- “That joke makes assumptions about a whole group of people.”

#### 2. In My Shoes

Explain how the comment or behavior affects you (or others), bringing focus to impact, not just intent. Examples:

- “I find that comment belittling and degrading.”
- “When I hear that, it makes me uncomfortable – it feels like a stereotype.”
- “That kind of statement can make people feel like they don't belong.”

#### 3. Talk About What We Want

Express what you'd like to see instead, which turns confrontation into constructive action. Examples:

- “I'd like us to be more thoughtful about how we talk about people.”
- “It would mean a lot if you took a moment to reflect on that.”
- “Next time, please try to see it from the other person's perspective.”

**If You're Not Sure What to Say**, start with **curious questions**:

- “What do you mean by that?”
- “Where did you hear that?”
- “Do you think that's true for everyone?”

Or express discomfort:

- “That didn't feel right to me.”
- “I'm not sure I agree with that.”

### When It's Hard to React In the Moment

That's completely normal – racist or harmful remarks can leave anyone stunned. Here's what you can do later:

- Talk to trusted colleagues, a manager, or your union rep
- Document what happened if needed
- Debrief with allies and make a plan for next time

### Acting in Solidarity

If you're not the target of racism, your voice is still very important Show solidarity by:

- Speak up - also when it's uncomfortable
- Not laughing along or ignoring racist jokes or comments
- Supporting others without speaking over them
- invite learning and growth

### Practicing Helps

Learning to address racism takes time and practice.

- Rehearse possible responses in the mirror or with friends
- Reflect on what stopped you from speaking up in past moments
- Build your toolkit of phrases that feel natural to you

