



Activities and Select Sources

ENGAGE YOUR FRIEND OR FAMILY MEMBER IN ACTIVITIES GEARED TO EXPAND PERSONAL AND CULTURAL AWARENESS

When friends or family members express fear because of a bad experience with someone from a different culture, who have voiced racist or culturally insensitive comments, or have shown a lack of awareness about equality issues, try to open their world through the following activities:

- Invite someone of different culture to join you and the family member or friend for dinner, lunch, or coffee. You should do this multiple times so the good experience is not seen as an anomaly.
- Attend events that immerse you, your family member and/or friends in different cultures—festivals, museum exhibits, films, church events, and lectures, story-telling events, for example.
- Screen films in your home that feature positive portrayals of other cultures.

KEEP YOUR EYES OPEN TO RACIST REMARKS OR ACTIONS IN THE PUBLIC ARENA

- Practice responding to common racist remarks or jokes using a variety of the aforementioned techniques.
- Practice responding to culturally insensitive remarks from friends, family, or co-workers.

Hip video on how to tell someone they sound racist [without using the term “racist.”]

<http://everydayfeminism.com/2013/08/people-sound-racist>

See sources from one of our other handouts, “Talking to Friends and Family about Racism.”



STRATEGIES FOR RESPONDING TO RACIST COMMENTS & JOKES

Be very mindful of your intonation and voice when you respond, adopting an attitude of calm curiosity rather than focusing on snappy comebacks. Remember, ultimately you want to open a conversation--not instill guilt or create defensiveness.

Try not to read intent where it might not exist. The person making the joke or comment might not realize how hurtful it is.

However, it is important to respond to the content of the racist comment as hurtful, for your sake and for those observing the interaction.

Use your judgment about how in depth you can get with the person.

Begin with a more minimal response, such as refusing to reinforce the comments and protesting with “I messages.” If the jokes and comments continue, continue protesting with stronger measures.

STICK TO CONTENT OF THE REMARK; DON’T ATTACK THE PERSON

- **“I messages”:** Tell the person, “I am very offended by those kinds of jokes (or comments).” These kind of jokes (comments) make me feel uncomfortable.” “I feel really sad when I hear that kind of comment.” “I just don’t appreciate humor that spreads misinformation about people.”

REFUSE TO REINFORCE THE COMMENT-- Send a message that you don’t think the joke is funny or worthy of attention.

- Don’t laugh.
- Remove eye contact.
- Leave before the punch line to avoid confrontation, especially when dealing with an already tense relationship.
- Respond with a nonsequitor: “I always wash my vegetables before eating.” “How about those Cardinals?” Bring up another topic, keeping a calm tone.

STRATEGIES FOR RESPONDING TO RACIST COMMENTS & JOKES, CONT.

CREATE A BOUNDARY FOR THOSE WHO ARE RESISTANT

- Sometimes it's best to talk to your family member or friend in private.
- Tell family member or friend that you love and appreciate him/her but find their views on race hurtful.
- Request in a calm firm voice that the person not use such epithets in your presence.
- Make your request short and sweet and then move on.
- Don't attack your family member or friend's character. Just let the person know that those comments make you feel uncomfortable.

Get Other Relatives or Friends to Help.

- If the friend/family member refuses to stop using racist comments /jokes enlist other friends or relatives to help approach her in a calm manner.
- If there is no one to help, write a note or email telling the friend or family member how hurtful you find those comments and to please refrain in the future.

Don't Argue.

- Don't get into a racial debate with your offending relative or friend.
- Stick to "I" messages, focusing on the comments not the validity of beliefs.

Set Consequences.

- If the offender doesn't cooperate and you don't want your children, for example, to hear these offensive remarks, inform the relative or friend that you will leave if they persist in making comments you find offensive.

USE HUMOR—This allows one to say something rather than nothing at all but must be delivered in a light, rhetorical, non-snarky way.

- "I just love having my life (or my friends' lives) reduced to a stereotype."

STRATEGIES FOR RESPONDING TO RACIST COMMENTS & JOKES, CONT.

OPEN A DIALOGUE AND DIG DEEPER FOR THOSE WHO SEEM INTERESTED

- **Use thought-provoking responses.**

"What is your experience with that?"

"What led you to say that?"

Gently probing questions can de-escalate the situation and sometimes lead to a constructive conversation.

Provide Information if you think the person is open.

- Brief facts can also be helpful to dispel misinformation. (See Time Wise link for some facts behind many common misrepresentations about Black America.)

REFRAME THE ISSUE IN A DIFFERENT CONTEXT

Begin with gentle introspection geared to recognizing one's own difficulties and advantages. This helps us to appreciate the difficulties of others, which, in turn, develops compassion and empathy.

- In your own life you have endured disadvantages, earned and unearned, that you shouldn't be blamed for, shamed for, and made to feel guilty about. What are some of those disadvantages? They can be things like birth order, sex, English wasn't your first language, parents' relationship to school, scholarships you didn't get, etc..
- In your own life you have received advantages, earned and unearned, that you shouldn't be blamed for, shamed for, and made to feel guilty about. What are some of those advantages? They can be things like birth order, sex, parents relationship to school, scholarships.

Identify some common advantages in everyday life:

- Ex: Men have the advantage when buying a car because salespeople assume they have more knowledge.
- Ex: Wealthier people can afford better colleges for their children.

These are sex and class advantages.

- Identify some racial advantages.
These are privileges.