

Facilitating Race Conversations



Initiating a conversation about race and racism isn't easy but it is a powerful expression of empathy. As a leader, knowing when and how to initiate race conversations is a critical component of equity and inclusion.

To the right are best practices to assist you in engaging in such a dialogue.



TAKE NOTE

Race-related events can cause a variety of negative emotions in your peers and teams.

- Has a race-related issue become a major news story?
- Are there race-related issues occurring on campus such as protests or racist incidents?
- If you have answered yes to either of these questions, it may be time to have a discussion with your team.



BE INTROSPECTIVE

Before initiating a discussion, assess your thoughts, emotions, and attitudes.

- Reflect on the lived experiences of your team members.
- Identify any related issues that make you uncomfortable.
- Understand that you only need to listen and that you do not need to fix the situation.



INITIATE DISCUSSION

Take the first step and reach out.

- Schedule a meeting to give your team the opportunity to share their feelings about the issue.



ESTABLISH GROUND RULES

Provide guidance on ways to enhance the conversation. Encourage participants to:

- Pay full attention
- Listen actively
- Lower any defenses
- Remove judgements
- Be open-minded
- Extend grace (ask for forgiveness and seek to forgive others who may say something that is considered offensive)



ENGAGE IN DIALOGUE

Share your feelings about the issue and encourage others to share theirs.

- Start the discussion with your feelings about the issue
- Ask others to share
- Don't feel pressured to fill silence



END WITH AFFIRMATION

- Acknowledge the courage it takes for people to engage in such a discussion.
- Thank them for the opportunity to discuss such a challenging issue.

For assistance with initiating a race conversation contact the Office of Diversity and Inclusion: diversity.syr.edu