

# 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](https://diversity.syr.edu)**