

Helpful Phrases to Use When Calling In/Calling Out

When calling someone in:

- Be intentional about the setting
 - Helpful phrases for asking for time/availability/getting the conversation going:
 - “Hey, I’d like to talk with you about some of the conversations that happened at our last X meeting. Would you be willing to set aside ~15 minutes next [date/time/meeting] to talk through some of it?”
 - “I’d like to share something with you that I find difficult to talk about. I value our relationship and it’s important to me that we talk about this. At our last [event], I noticed you said [insert hurtful statement]. This was hurtful to me because it:
 - Made me feel [unwelcome/attacked/lesser-than] based on my identity [it may be helpful to have resources for this on hand to share with them for further reading]
 - Devalued the time/effort that I put into our collaboration
 - Made me feel like my voice wasn’t heard”
- Focus on impact over intention
 - If they say “I didn’t mean to cause harm” or “that wasn’t my intention”, here are some helpful phrases:
 - “I fully believe that you didn’t mean to hurt me and that it wasn’t your intention. But still, I wanted to let you know that [the specific words/actions] you took in the moment made me feel uncomfortable and I wanted to be able to tell you so that we could move forward from this and keep working together in a way that feels inclusive for both of us”
 - “I believe you. But the impact of our actions can have unintended consequences based on the ways we perceive the world and also the ways that other people perceive us. I wanted to bring this up with you so you might be able to see my point of view. I trust in your ability to see how what you [said/did] affected me and hope we can move forward from this and keep working together in meaningful ways.”
- Active listening
 - Helpful phrases:
 - “If you feel comfortable, could you tell me a bit more about that?”
 - “What I’m hearing is...[paraphrase/interpret/analyze what they told you]”
 - “I’ve noticed that you...”
 - This can be used to provide positive reinforcement throughout the conversation (ex: I’ve noticed that throughout this conversation, you’ve been engaging authentically and honestly and I really appreciate that, thank you.)
 - This can be used to point out problematic behavior mid-conversation, too (ex: “I’ve noticed that throughout this conversation, you keep looking at which makes me feel unheard. Would you mind setting it down so we can talk together or is there

another time you could meet where we can both focus on the conversation at hand?”)

- This can also be used to clarify actions/words. “I noticed that you [describe behavior here], and I just wanted to make sure we’re on the same page when this happens. Could you elaborate what’s going on in your mind when that happens?”
- Offer space
 - If they need time to process, you could say:
 - “I know these conversations are difficult and it’s a lot to take in at once. I’m happy to give you some time to think about this.”
 - If the conversation isn’t going in the way you anticipated and it’s causing you distress:
 - If you’re open to talking later: “I hear that this is also a difficult conversation for you, too. At this time, I’d prefer to pause this conversation so we can both process this conversation and touch base at a later time. How does that sound to you?”
 - If you’re not comfortable with talking about this later: “I fully acknowledge that this is difficult feedback to receive. I hope you’re able to see why this was hard for me to bring up to you. This conversation is becoming difficult for me to continue, emotionally. I need some time and space to deal with this.”
 - If you feel comfortable with following up and providing resources/articles to explain why their behavior was problematic, you can add: “I will do my best to follow up with helpful resources.”
 - Sometimes sending articles after the conversation can help diffuse the emotional tension of these conversations where the weight of educating the person who did the problematic behavior falls on the person who experienced the problematic behavior. You don’t have to offer this option, but it can be a way to continue the conversation with less person-to-person emotional/social tension.

Helpful phrases to call someone out:

- Humor
- Compliment Sandwiches
 - “I think you have really important and valid points around this topic, and I’d just like to highlight that what you just said in response to this group conversation is or could be hurtful to some folks based on their identity. Thank you for providing feedback around this and also for being open to feedback.
- Sharp
 - “We don’t use language like that here.”
- Matter-of-fact
 - “Just as a heads up, that microaggression/hurtful comment wasn’t cool.”
- Explanatory/Educational

- “You might not know, but that [microaggression/hurtful comment] plays into stereotypes and harmful dynamics for some of us in this room. I’m happy to talk more, but be mindful in the future.”

When being called in or out, here are some helpful phrases you could use for each step:

- Pause
 - “Thank you for sharing that with me. Is it okay if I take a minute just to quickly reflect and recall the context that this moment happened in?”
 - Breathe
 - Acknowledge defensive feelings if they happen, resist the urge to deny/be on the defense.
- Remind yourself of why the feedback is helpful
 - This is how we grow individually and also how we build deeper relationships with our community
 - This person probably had many apprehensions coming into this conversation and decided that the benefits outweighed the risks--how can we support them?
- Listen to understand
- Repeat what you heard
 - “What I’m hearing is [paraphrase the situation they’re describing and how what you did/said made them feel]”
 - “If I’m understanding this correctly [paraphrase the situation]”
 - “Please correct me if I’m not understanding or interpreting what you’re saying in the way you envisioned, but this is what I’m hearing. [Paraphrase]”
- Say thank you
 - “Thank you for sharing this with me. I know it probably wasn’t easy to decide to have this conversation, but please know that I value our relationship and your openness to help me moving forward”
- Ask questions to understand the feedback
 - “If you feel comfortable, would you be willing to provide an example of when I did this? It would help me pinpoint certain instances in my memory so that I can correct myself moving forward”
 - “I want to make sure I’m understanding you correctly. In the future, would it be helpful if I [paraphrase what you think they would like you to do in the future]?”
- Feel free to ask for time to process and then follow up
 - “Again, thank you so much for sharing this with me. I think I need some time to process this information and to do some personal research/learning. Would you be okay with checking in with each other in X [days/weeks/months]?”

For further reading:

- To help evaluate whether you want to call in and call out:
<https://everydayfeminism.com/2015/03/calling-in-and-calling-out/>