

Talking points – Effective Strategies for Confronting Racism in Conversation

These strategies were generated from [What's UP?! Pgh](#) Conversation Salons over the years. Thank you to all the participants, planners, facilitators and space providers!

Keep in mind the **elements** of the situation:

- Timing - now or later? Can you come back to it if you are flustered or not informed?
- The environment/setting - workplace, family gathering, street corner, living room, bar?
- The relationship - stranger, friend, uncle, co-worker, etc? Loving or disliking or non-existent?
- Identities - Their identity and how that plays into the dynamic? Yours?
- Who else is around - other white people? People of color? Children?
- Your motivation to respond? Your intentions? Your goals?
- How you respond can vary each time, based on the above and how you are feeling.

Friendly reminder: having the choice about whether or not to address racist or oppressive comments is a privilege. And please take care of yourself and your **emotions** around this. Check in with a friend, vent, ask for help, etc, if you have a confrontational moment.

Also, remember **safety**. While given the luxury to respond or not as white people, there can still be dangers in confronting others - especially strangers. Please be safe and brave.

Now some **tips**:

- Know yourself.
- Educate yourself so you can present history and facts.
- Share those resources with the people you are talking with, too
- Recognize intentions, ask about intentions. Recognize and explore your own, too.
- Humanize the other person. Try to understand intentions, their experiences.
- Create a brave space, if possible, for you both to share. Have understandings and agreements
- Build relationships if applicable. Show interest.
- It's ok to not be polished or perfect in your delivery. We **MUST** make mistakes
- Have internal process, collect thoughts, take space and come back to conversation if possible/desired.
- Get in touch with your body so you can know what emotions you are feeling to try to have more control over your response.
- Meridian tapping – to bring your emotions down. Other emotional strategies
- Out yourself as someone with similar thought struggles –“wow I used to think like that and someone told me or I realized I was...”
- Be vulnerable when asking for vulnerability from others
- Strength in numbers – get others involved.
- Ask questions, dig deeper! ‘what?’, ‘What did you mean by...?’, ‘Have you heard how that statement can be interpreted as racist?’
- Show another side, shine light on how things could be/go that are not just the worst way/a person with the worst intentions
- Use humor. Can be sarcastic. Can be honest.
- Be direct. Be clear. Clarify if you don't feel clear/they don't understand.
- Charm people.

- Be rude! “what the h-e-double hockey sticks are you talking about?!” Sometimes you just gotta tell somebody something!
- Be firm! ‘You can’t say that here/around me’
- Use transparency around confusion, annoyance and/or anger you may have. Say what your emotions are without judgment of them and yourself.
- Use I-statements: ‘When I hear a comment like that, I feel really disappointed...’
- Make normal the ‘other’ : ‘My friend is from Thailand and I have never seen them act the way you’re generalizing before...’
- Interrupt the ‘white as normal’ idea – like “oh are you talking about white people?” when people are leaving out that detail and making generalization about all people when they mean white people.
- Know that you don’t have to understand to accept another’s point of view/experience and let others know that they don’t have to either — and it’s actually not your job to understand and a lot of times you might not ever be able too. “as a white person i can’t understand really what it feels like to be black – i can accept their point of view”
- If possible/safe - Don’t write people off cuz they said something racist. Doing that means you don’t think people can change. And that is a criminal justice mindset. That is not acknowledging your own journey of transformation and change.
- Be patient - with self and others
- Try and be in it for the long haul, follow a conversation as far as it goes. Come back to it if more is needed.
- Know when to walk away.
- Go offline if it’s happening there and bring it to IRL

Skills and tactics specifically from the family convo salon:

- Use a strength-based approach and do it with love (forgiveness, being present, breathing, mindfulness, embracing complexity, encouraging the good and growth, be choosy about when and how and use respect)
- Choose your battles. Timing is important
- Use relationship knowledge and care for said relationship
- Speak from your own experience
- Meet people where they are at
- Keep in mind prior layers and dynamics, and acknowledge and address them if you can
- Find out what’s really going on (like frustration with another relationship or a boss situation) and get to that while then addressing the race issue that maybe brought you there.
- Empathy
- Offer help (in educational resources, in solutions to their problems, etc)
- Use reason
- Use emotion
- Recognize dead ends in the conversation and steer clear or return when more potential exists
- Focus on the individual and what they can control rather than others involved