

Implicit Bias Talk Moves

How to Use This Resource:

This resource is a list of sentence stems and conversation starters that will empower educators to discuss implicit bias with students and colleagues. While it is crucial to confront biased behavior, discrimination, and racism, these conversation stems are not intended to force conversations, but rather invite productive engagement between individuals.

Initiating Conversations about Implicit Bias

Use these conversation starters to proactively start a dialogue about implicit bias, when there is no specific behavior or harm to be addressed.

- **Are you willing to have an honest dialogue with me about...?**
This question empowers the other person to consent or decline, based on their assessment of their readiness to engage productively.
- **It's important to me that we discuss...**
This statement prioritizes the conversation as something that matters to you personally. It conveys to the other individual that if they respect you, they should also treat the discussion with respect.

Challenging Implicit Biases

Use these conversation starters after an individual has made a statement that conveys implicit bias.

- **I have a different perspective. May I share it with you?**
This response does not indict the individual or tell them that they are wrong. However, it does cue them in that you are going to share something that may be in opposition to their beliefs. This conversation stem invites them to listen if they are ready or decline if they are not.
- **Can you tell me why you feel that way?**
This response prompts the individual to dig beneath surface level stereotypes or misconceptions and unpack the true nature of their feelings or beliefs.

Addressing Biased Behavior

Use these conversation starters after you have witnessed a person do or say something offensive.

- **When I saw / heard _____, I felt...**
This statement begins with an objective observation before sharing



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your feelings. It does not presume that the other person acted intentionally out of malice and allows you to challenge their perspective.

- **Let's take a moment to consider how _____ might have felt when they saw/heard _____.**
This conversation starter signals empathy, which is essential in conversations about implicit bias. It invites individuals to enrich their perspective rather than indicting them for their actions.

Telling Your Own Story

Use these conversation starters to begin sharing your own experiences with implicit bias.

- **In my experience, ...**
This statement centers on your lived experience and your truth. It encourages active listening rather than debate, as individuals engage with your narrative rather than defending ideas.
- **As an individual who identifies as...**
This statement connects you as an individual, with a broader social group. It makes it less probable for the other person to classify you as an exception or not “really” a member of that social group.

