

INTERRUPTING BIAS: A TECHNIQUE

THE PALS APPROACH

This is a methodology to use when you hear someone say something that may be problematic or hurtful to a specific group of people or yourself. The major objective of this approach is to stay connected with the person and speak your truth clearly.

P

Pause

Pause/Halt/Stop/Slow the conversation

Things you can say:

- "Wait a Second,"
- "Excuse me,"
- "Um, hold on a second..."

The goal here is to interrupt the flow of the conversation to let the speaker know that you are interested in learning more about something they just said. Use your own instinct and language, but the most important first step is pausing the conversation when you hear something that you think might need to be addressed further.

A

Acknowledge/Ask

Acknowledge what the person is saying.

This sends the message that you are trying to make meaning out of what the person said, even if it is at odds with your own ideas. It shows respect/dignity/interest in collaboration/dialogue.

- "What I hear you saying is..."
- Or: "I appreciate your thinking on this..."

Ask for clarification, get curious, make sure you understand what the person said.

- "That sounds important, can you say more?"

Let them know what you think you heard them say.

Maybe you misunderstood the person. Keep your voice calm. Sometimes that is all you need to do.

- "I think you said that gender defines who makes a good leader."

L

Listen

Listen to what the person said.

Treat them with dignity.
What really matters to the person?

Though listening may sound simple, it is probably the most important thing you can do to continue to engage the person. There is a difference

between simply hearing a person in order to think of your response and the more active, engaged listening that takes place when you are truly trying to understand the meaning of what is being said. It is important to get curious and authentically listen to learn.

S

Speak Your Truth/Share Stories

Speak your truth. Be clear.

Describe your objection.

Share your learning. Speak calmly.

There is something powerful in story telling. While sharing factual data may be helpful, we know that people are moved to open up and take other perspectives when they hear stories.

You may share your own story, or share the story about someone you know.

- "I used to think that way too, but I have learned this is a stereotype and a person can be a good leader regardless of gender."



BUILDING INCLUSIVE COMMUNITIES

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The Tips for Building Inclusive Communities Series was designed to address questions from faculty, staff, students, and community members about how to create inclusive spaces in classrooms, meetings, on study abroad, in community settings and beyond. Every Tip in the series is designed to share basic details about different methods for creating inclusive communities in a way that is quickly accessible to the reader.

BUILDING INCLUSIVE COMMUNITIES is a university-wide initiative that reflects Michigan State University's core value of inclusion and its rich history in supporting the efforts of every student to realize their full potential through academic pursuit. Students, alumni, faculty, and staff carry this message forward, on campus and across the globe to help build inclusive communities where diversity and differences are acknowledged as strengths.

It is the mission of the Office for Inclusive Excellence and Impact to promote Building Inclusive Communities so that our differences will be acknowledged as our strength, so that we can be different together, and that our many voices sound together to form one will. The need to embrace and share this message has never been greater.

Why Build Inclusive Communities? When we participate in the process of Building Inclusive Communities we create the opportunity to see the world differently, in our research, in the work we pursue, in the classroom, in social relationships, as consumers, voters, partners, families, travelers, and more. Building Inclusive Communities starts with a frame of mind and a deep-seated understanding that inclusion is at the core of MSU's values and the very foundation of our life-long educational journey. But results don't occur overnight. It takes time and commitment to sustain. Together we will create a supportive and welcoming environment for all Spartans.

