

# Interrupting Oppression: Techniques & Strategies

Diversity Training | [Insert Date]

## When you witness or experience an act of oppression:

- *As you're determining whether or not to engage...*
  - Try to understand the person's individual behavior in the context of the societal structures and patterns that affect us all: remember, most microaggressive behaviors are inadvertent and/or well-intentioned
- *If you feel comfortable engaging the person in conversation...*
  - Try to connect with them and meet them where they're at: What are their needs? Why did they say or do what they did?
  - Tell them why you decided to talk with them and invite them into a dialogue
  - Use "I" statements and speak from personal experience
  - Make a distinction between the good character you know they possess and the problematic behavior you witnessed them perform
  - Give them the grace to make mistakes
  - Circle back and reflect at the end of the conversation
- *If you do not feel comfortable engaging the person in conversation...*
  - It's okay to walk away, for any reason: self-care is essential and requires no explanation
  - Call upon your support system: whether that's a colleague at the desk who can step in at the moment, or a friend you can confide in afterward

## When you offend someone:

- *If you are "called out" on your behavior...*
  - Recognize your natural defensive tendencies: focus on the impact of your words or actions rather than your intent
  - Listen for understanding:
    - Try to connect with the other person's feelings and needs
    - Allow them to tell their story
    - Avoid offering advice: give feedback that demonstrates your full engagement in the conversation
    - Recognize your own filters and blind-spots
  - Take responsibility for and acknowledge your own behavior
    - Avoid "buts" and "ifs" (e.g. "I'm sorry if I offended you...")
  - Make a commitment to change your behavior and follow through
  - Say "thank you"
- *If you notice a problem with your own behavior, but have not been "called out"...*
  - Ask the other person if they're comfortable discussing the situation with you: remember, someone may choose to walk away for any reason

## Whichever side of the conversation you are on...

- Ask open-ended, clarifying questions
- Know that the other person's perspective is their reality
- Talk about emotions and describe feelings in ways that can help others understand them
- Recognize that we all have prejudices and biases; always be interruptible yourself

Adapted from Hollins, C., & Govan, I. (2011). *Training the trainer: Helpful tips for leading & facilitating conversations on race*. Renton, WA.: Cultures Connecting, LLC.; Ramsey, F. [chescaleigh]. (2013, September 6). *Getting called out: How to apologize* [Video file]. Retrieved from <http://youtu.be/C8xJXKYL8pU>; and Portland State University Civil Dialogue Committee. (n.d.). *Interrupting Oppressive Language*. Retrieved from <http://www.pdx.edu/civil-dialogue-committee/interrupting-oppressive-language>