Tools & Tips

Responding in Cross-Cultural Conflicts
A. Responding to Common Dialogue Blockers

1. PLEs ~ Perfectly Logical Explanations
   - That may be true, but here’s how I see it….or another way to view it...
   - There may be a number of factors that contributed to this situation. Another one that does have to do with diversity might be......
   - When you say that, I feel you’re discounting my experience. In that situation, I felt...
   - You could be right that this one specific time it had nothing to do with prejudice. But it feels so similar to so many other times in my experience when I have been treated negatively/experienced discrimination…it’s hard to not assume this is just like all those other times....
   - Your opinion that this has nothing to do with prejudice could be true...But what would it mean if my perception was true: that this person reacted to me out of their bias and stereotypes?

2. Yeah, but....
   - What do you think the impact on me is when you say that?
   - You may not have intended this, but when you give a “YEA, BUT” I feel discounted and that you have dismissed my perspective and experience.
   - I’m curious what you were hoping to communicate with that statement?
   - Honestly, I’m rather upset about what happened. And I can’t hear your perspective right now.
   - What I need is for someone to just listen to me and acknowledge what I experienced and am feeling....
   - I’m curious why you chose to give me a “Yeah, But” just now?

3. That happens to me/my group, too....
   This dynamic/situation does happen to other groups, too. The difference might be HOW OFTEN how often it happens to them, and WHY it happens to them. For instance, most whites have received bad customer service. But --- it rarely happens to them because someone has prejudice towards them
   - How does it feel when it happens to you? How often does that happen? Why does it happen to you? (So you have a “window of understanding” to connect to what I and my group experience much of the time.)

4. I know someone who…and they don’t agree with you....
   - There might be some people who don’t see this as I do. That doesn’t discount my experience or perception.
   - Not all _____ may feel like I do. And, unfortunately, there are many around here that do agree with me and have had very similar experiences. Are you open to hearing more about my experiences?
5. I don’t see it that way...(therefore, it doesn’t really happen....)
- You might not have ever recognized this dynamic before or seen it happen. There was a time I didn’t see it this way, either. But after having it happen SO MANY times and when I can’t find any other explanation, that I now believe that there most often is some prejudice underneath this type of reaction....

6. That doesn’t happen to me...(so it doesn’t exist)
- I’m glad and hopeful that it doesn’t. And hope you never do experience this. And this is what happened to me, and I’ve heard many other folks describe all too similar experiences....
- It might not, or you may not notice it happening to you....but here’s what I’ve tracked and noticed in my life....

7. Don’t you think that...
- I’m wondering if you have a statement behind your question.....
- Do you have a specific example that illustrates what you’re trying to ask or say?
- I’m curious what you think about that....

8. You’re overreacting...you’re too sensitive...
- You may not agree, but I feel very strongly about this. And I would appreciate your respecting me enough to at least acknowledge my perspective.
- When you say that, I want to end the conversation and would probably never talk to you about these serious issues again.
- Your intent might be to try to help or support me, but the impact of that statement is infuriating.

9. He/she’s a good person...they never meant to do that....
- That comment just dismissed and discounted my experience.
- Many “good people” do very inappropriate and harmful things.
- Regardless of the intent, this was the impact of their actions....
- I’m not questioning if they’re good or bad, I’m talking about the impact of their actions.

10. That was not my intent! You misunderstood me!
- I’m open to hearing your intent, but I’d first appreciate your acknowledging the impact of your comment/actions....
- What was your intent....I hear your intent was __________, and I hope you can also realize the impact was different than what you intended.

11. That had nothing to do with _____ (an “ism”)! It’s just their personality!
- That may be what you believe, and I have observed/experienced this type of situation so many times...and I have tracked a diversity cut to this...Here’s the way I see it...

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B. Responding When Someone is Triggered

- I’m noticing you’re speaking with a lot of energy and emotion...
- I’m wondering if you’re feeling triggered right now?
- This response is unusual for you... I’m wondering what else is going on for you?
- I’m wondering if something else is going on or did something happen that’s related to why you’re feeling this way?
- You’re raising issues I want to talk about, and I’m also noticing that the depth of your emotions seems out of proportion to this situation...
- I notice I’m feeling a little triggered, and I wonder if you are, too?
- I think we’re both a bit triggered right now....
- I want to talk about this further, and I can hear you better when you’re not so triggered. What if we take a break and then come back to talk about this...

C. Responding When Someone is Reacting out of Cumulative Impact

- Obviously I’ve said/done something to trigger you. What’s going on?
- I can see you have a strong reaction to this. What happened?
- My guess is this is:
  - an example of what has happened to you a lot in the past....
  - what happens to you all the time...
  - not the first time something like this has happened...
- I’m open to hearing what happened if you want to talk....
- Is there anything I can do to be supportive of you?

D. Responding When Your Comment or Action Has Had a Negative Impact on Someone Else

- It seems what I said had an impact on you. I’m open to hearing it.
- I want to apologize for what I said/did.... I was wrong... and I’m open to hearing how I’ve impacted you....
- Thank you for letting me know this. It is my intention to change my behavior in the future...
- Is there anything I can do to make amends...

E. Responding When You Are Triggered

- I notice I feel triggered right now....
- That’s a trigger word/phrase for me...
- I need to take a break and come back to this later....
- I need to stop a moment and talk about what just happened. I’m feeling triggered and this is why....
- This may have more to do with me than you, but I’m feeling triggered by what you just said....