



Getting to We on Issues That Matter

Knowing how to effectively navigate emotionally-laden discussions on racism, sexism, and heterosexism can be challenging and disruptive. You may be right about how you have assessed a situation but not effective in managing it. When the goal is to “get to we” in the communication process, then leaning into being effective rather than positioning yourself as right is one strategy.

Being Right	Being Effective
Individual may be racist/sexist/homophobic/xenophobic/Anti-Semitic and you call them out on it.	First acknowledge that the ism exists and then ask probing questions that demonstrate curiosity about how they formed their conclusion. For example, “From where I sit, what you just did (said) is offensive and really a destructive belief about _____. I am curious about how you came to that conclusion.” Try to draw out common values without blaming or shaming the individual but giving examples on the impact on the group.
Individual is ill-informed or under-informed and you school them on where they are wrong, providing resources and citations.	Test the assumptions (yours and theirs) about their beliefs. Identify the identity triggers embedded in their beliefs. Build on common facts. “I believe we are starting from different places on this, and we don’t share the same facts, but it is important for me to understand what it is that informs your thinking and why it is important to you to hold on to that belief.”

<p>Individual demonstrates fixed or dysfunctional thinking patterns. You point out their illogical thinking or where their argument falls short.</p>	<p>Recognize when there isn't capacity to be influenced or take in new or different information. We cannot change another person's behavior or thinking but we can create a climate where they will want to change.</p> <p>Focus on managing your own energy and self-care, and if necessary, move on with grace and in a civil manner. If you cannot place a positive tag on someone then give them a silent blessing and move on with gratitude for whatever insights that will surface upon private reflection.</p>
<p>Individual may be emotional and unreasonable, and you push them to be rationale and to button down their emotions.</p>	<p>Meet them on an emotional level rather than from a cerebral level.</p> <p>"I can tell this is something that brings up a lot of emotions for you and it's an important conversation for me as well. I feel ...and I want you to hear what I have to say but I don't think this is the time...can we talk later?"</p>
<p>Individual coming from a parental or authoritarian position (critical and nurturing)</p>	<p>Respond as an adult (rational) rather than childlike (dependent) to shift the dynamics.</p> <p>"I am curious about what is motivating you..." "I want to understand what influences that belief..."</p>