

Guidance for Talking about Racism

The Ohio State University College of Nursing is committed to building and maintaining a diverse, caring and well community to reflect human diversity and improve opportunities for all. We are committed to equal opportunity, affirmative action, eliminating harassment and discrimination, and a culture of wellness. These commitments are both a moral imperative consistent with an intellectual community that celebrates individual differences and diversity as well as a matter of law. The CON has zero tolerance for racism and incivility.

You may have noticed that members of our College of Nursing family are deeply impacted by current events in our society – the murders of George Floyd, Breona Taylor, and Ahmaud Arbery, the resulting ongoing protests, and the COVID-19 pandemic – and naturally want to talk about these situations. They may feel uncomfortable talking about these issues. We all respond in different ways to trauma, crisis and uncertainty; it is expected and likely that the deep emotional responses to these injustices will, in turn, have an effect on our work as well as on our mental health and well-being. As faculty and staff, it is important for you to share, listen, and support each other by creating a culture of caring, wellness and consideration. Based on your role, you may also need to have a conversation with your team members and students, and offering to have conversations with them about what our society is experiencing, stemming from the senseless murders of blacks in the United States.

For some of your team members, colleagues and students, this may be a time to actively listen, express empathy and to offer support. You will want to provide additional educational resources for them. For other team members, colleagues and students, they may be looking to share their experiences of injustice and convey emotions, including anger, anxiety, grief, depression and deep sadness. No matter what is needed, it is important to support them.

Everyone has biases, but we all have a responsibility to recognize those biases and work to address them in order to create equitable situations for those around us. Self-reflection is encouraged as it is necessary for constructive change. Understand that implicit bias trainings alone, are not enough.

Racism is not an issue to be addressed solely by the Office of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion. We all need to be accountable for our behaviors. Strategies need to include acceptance of diverse ideas and perspectives. Our faculty, staff and students deserve validation of their feelings and a commitment to a just, kind, civil, caring and well culture.

This information can be used as a guide to help you to have crucial conversations, which may be challenging, but are important and necessary.

Initial Points to Consider When Discussing Racism

1. *Establish guidelines for discussion.*
 - a. Rules for the conversation need established first. Create a safe, confidential and respectful environment.
2. *Help with accepting discomfort and uncertainty.*
 - a. These conversations may be hard, but they are necessary and it reinforces transparency to acknowledge that it is hard.
 - b. For those of you who have not participated in any diversity, equity and inclusion trainings or workshops or are feeling unprepared, please reach out to the Office of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion for additional guidance and support. You are not alone on this journey.

2. *Clarify that the goal is not to be “colorblind.”*
 - a. Stating that one is colorblind is not acknowledging the differences of others. Be clear that conversations are about recognition and understanding and are not to imply that anyone is a racist.
3. *Acknowledge that learning about race and racism is a process*
 - a. Ongoing learning opportunities are necessary. Everyone has a role to acknowledge what they do and don't know and strive to learn more.
4. *Provide opportunities to learn about other races and foster empathy.*
 - a. How can you intentionally incorporate diversity into your work? What is missing? Consult with the Office of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion for ideas.
5. *Address white privilege in non-defensive ways.*
 - a. Explain that bias can affect people in two ways, benefiting some and disadvantaging others. Consider Implicit Bias Association Tests as self-reflective activities.
6. *Connect to ally behavior and engage in social justice.*
 - a. The Office of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion can assist with ideas and offerings. Share your ideas and those gained with others, including faculty, staff, and students. Diverse perspectives are wanted, needed and welcomed.

Below are some specific actions you can take to address racism

1. *Acknowledge what is happening.*
 - a. Take a stand against racism, police violence, and incivility.
 - b. The Ohio State University is committed to promoting equality, justice, civility and fair treatment.
 - c. Educate yourself on facts about racism and injustices, and engage in self-reflection. Do you understand why change needs to occur?
 - d. Silence is a voice and counteracts effective leadership. Do not be silent.
2. *Reduce work-related pressures.*
 - a. Allow space for people to be stressed, angry, afraid, confused, or temporarily disengaged from work, especially black people.
 - b. Promote good self-care by encouraging flexible work schedules, providing extensions on deadlines, cancelling or rescheduling non-urgent meetings, encouraging participation in the university's health and wellness programming and resources, and being mindful of new tasks/requests placed on others.
If you observe a colleague who is struggling with depression or anxiety, especially if it is interfering with work performance, please encourage him or her to seek help through our Employee Assistance Program and reinforce that everyone needs help at times in life and seeking help is not an embarrassment or sign of weakness. If you observe a student who is struggling with the same issues, please refer to our CON's mental health counselor, Shelby Woith, or Ohio State's Counseling and Consultation Service.
 - c. Support others so they can be themselves.

3. *Provide space for discussion.*

Review this list of Do's and Don'ts

Do:	Don't
Have a discussion with your team, colleagues and students about the issues; if necessary, offer 1-1 sessions so safe space options are provided.	Do not single out people to speak or expect black people to have the answer or a long list of resources to address racism.
Listen carefully and take appropriate action.	Do not become overly defensive, especially if your views or advantages are questioned or challenged.
Be vulnerable. Share how you feel and provide your own reflections. Show that you care about these issues, regardless of your race.	Do not overgeneralize about groups of people involved in public conflict.
Help team members, colleagues, and students of various race/ethnicity to contribute to race conversation and their role in advocating for change.	Do not show a lack of respect or empathy for perspectives shared. Do not say things such as "I don't know what people are so upset about."

Acknowledge your involvement in efforts intentional about combatting racism. Remind others of messages from university leadership. Reinforce your commitment to change.

4. *Give concrete actions for others to take (and adhere to them yourself).*

- c. Speak up when you experience or witness intolerance, mistreatment, bias in action or incivility.
 - i. The University's Office of Institutional Equity (OIE) was created to coordinate the university's response to all complaints of harassment, discrimination, and sexual misconduct. To learn more about your rights to be free from harassment and discrimination, to get assistance connecting with support resources, or to file a report, please contact OIE at:
 - 1. Online – report form at equity.osu.edu
 - 2. Call – 614-247-5838
 - 3. Email _equity@osu.edu
 - 4. An anonymous concern may also be reported through EthicsPoint: ohio-state.ethicspoint.com.
 - ii. Please refer to <https://odi.osu.edu/racial-justice-resources> for more information and additional resources.
- d. Create a kind, caring and inclusive environment for everyone.
- e. Process your feelings.
- f. Commit to learning, growing and change. Share resources with others, and don't forget about your own learning opportunities as a leader

Strategies adapted from:

Anti-Defamation League. (2017). How Should I Talk about Race in My Mostly White Classroom. Retrieved from <https://www.adl.org/media/10921/download>

Gerdeman, D. (2019). 6 Steps to Building a Better Workplace for Black Employees. Retrieved from <https://hbswk.hbs.edu/item/6-steps-to-building-a-better-workplace-for-black-employees>

Loosvelt, D. (2020). How to Talk About George Floyd and Racism with your Team. Retrieved from <https://www.vault.com/blogs/workplace-issues/how-to-talk-about-george-floyd-and-racism-with-your-team>

Zheng, L., (2020). What Managers Should—and Shouldn't—do to Address This Moment of Racial Reckoning. Retrieved from <https://www.cnbc.com/2020/06/03/what-managers-should-and-should-not-do-to-address-moment-of-racial-reckoning.html>

Ohio State does not discriminate on the basis of age, ancestry, color, disability, gender identity or expression, genetic information, HIV/AIDS status, military status, national origin, race, religion, sex, gender, sexual orientation, pregnancy, protected veteran status, or any other bases under the law, in its activities, academic programs, admission, and employment.

This guidance is brought to you from the Office of the Chief Wellness Officer, the College of Nursing's Office of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion, Ohio State's Office of Diversity and Inclusion, and Human Resources.

June 16, 2020, revised July 19, 2020