

Ten Tips for Talking About Race

1. Normalize discussing race. Use the terms. Reference the ideas. The more you do so, the less uncomfortable it will feel to talk about race.
2. Find multiple entry points. Look for places where others will be somewhat willing to enter, where they have some skin in the game, and where they can see how they might personally benefit from the discussion. Remember that racism and white supremacy negatively affect everyone and consider how you might help them see that as well.
3. Be humble. You are also a work in progress, and you've made mistakes in the past. You've been on your own journey. At some point in the future, you'll hopefully look back and see how much you didn't know at this point. We're all on this journey together.
4. Know what you are talking about. Prepare, practice. Don't be sloppy.
5. Be clear: offer sharp and clear definitions. Don't throw around terms that someone else might not know—especially if you're throwing them as a way of leveraging power over someone. Check for understanding during the conversation—in a way that is not paternalistic.
6. Make a distinction between blame and responsibility. The way things are is not our fault, but it is our responsibility to clean up the mess we're in because many of us are benefiting from the privileges granted us because of our race, class, gender, sexual orientation, abilities and so on.
7. Be clear about purpose. Have conversations about race to help others grow and meet people's needs, to help others feel more whole, and to help our world heal—not so that you can feel righteous and powerful.
8. Build relationship. Build trust. If your purpose is to help someone grow and gain insight, then the space in which that conversation happens needs to be *safe-enough*. We don't aim for a "safe space"—that's a subjective evaluation around which there'll be disagreement. The purported lack of a "safe space" is also often used as an excuse for why we can't have conversations about race. Safe-enough doesn't mean comfortable.
9. Invite, accept and acknowledge emotions—your own and those of other. There's no way we can (or should) have conversations about race without having any emotions. Emotions can be our partners, a resource, and our teachers. Tears are not the problem—it's how we respond to those tears that can be an issue. But remember: Systems of oppression don't want you to have emotions, so if you reclaim and accept them, you're actively rebuking these systems.
10. Ask for feedback on any conversations that you facilitate around race, reflect on your facilitation and leadership, own any messy moments that you are responsible for, and commit to the process.