

Video: Confrontation and Dialoguing

Talking Points

Perhaps an acquaintance tells a joke that plays on a stereotype about women, a co-worker comments that some groups are just naturally better than others at a certain activity, or a family member makes an anti-gay remark. We can stand by and say nothing, or we can stand up and confront others, thus possibly promoting some very useful dialogue. By doing so, other people may end up coming to see issues from our perspective or learning something new that changes how they think about an issue. Or, maybe they won't change, which is their choice. But at least we've done our part to try to promote inclusive behavior and to create social norms against the expression of stereotypes and prejudices. Research indicates that confrontation is a very powerful tool for curbing bias and creating new understandings between groups. Anyone can engage in confrontation. A straight person might confront another straight person about a comment made about gays, or a man might confront another man (or even a woman) about a joke made about women. This sort of ally confrontation can be especially effective at stopping bias in its tracks. Research shows that confrontations by anyone can be effective, but when an ally speaks up, they have the most influence.

- What do you think about the confrontation in the video? What features of the confrontation likely contributed to its “success” (i.e., that it went well and created a mutual understanding)?
- Note that the point of this video is not that “All Blacks think that Blacks can use the N word and Whites should not” (indeed, this is not an accurate statement). Rather, the video illustrates how people can engage in useful dialogue to come to an understanding about why certain things may be offensive to certain people. Often perceived offensiveness is linked to historical or present-day treatment of groups. Can you think of other examples of “confrontable” behaviors?
- What are your personal experiences with confrontation?
- Research suggests that people frequently *want* to confront but do not say anything because they don't know just what to say or are afraid of others' reactions. What suggestions do have for speaking up and in ways help people to avoid negative reactions from others?

You might be interested in reading this commentary on “5 Reasons to Confront Prejudice,” <https://www.psychologytoday.com/blog/power-and-prejudice/201311/speak-or-stay-silent-5-reasons-confront-prejudice>