

# INTERRUPTING HARMFUL AND OPPRESSIVE LANGUAGE

Addressing oppression and harmful language in meetings is necessary to create an inclusive and respectful environment. It's important to actively interrupt and address oppressive language to ensure everyone feels safe and valued.

## WHAT THIS IS ABOUT

### A Brief Introduction

Intervening in harmful language and oppressive behaviors in meetings is about creating and maintaining an environment where everyone feels safer, respected, and valued regardless of their background or identity. It involves recognizing the impact of oppressive language and taking proactive steps to address it for the creation of a more inclusive and equitable space for all.

## THINGS TO SAY

### Example Facilitator Script

First Degree: *"Can we pause for a moment? While I believe the intention may not be to cause harm, it's important to recognize that the language used can have a negative impact on some communities"*

Second Degree: *"I need to step in here. The language being used isn't okay, and it's not up for debate. Let's switch gears and focus on..."*

## THINGS TO DO

### Tips for Managing Group Dynamics

#### 1. Listen Actively

Pay attention to language and behavior in meetings and be prepared to intervene if you hear harmful language or witness oppressive behavior.

#### 2. Use Privilege for Good

If you hold privilege in certain areas, whether it be culturally, positionally, or expertise through lived experiences, use it to amplify the voices of marginalized individuals and challenge oppressive language or behavior. Make certain to speak from your own perspective.

#### 3. Offer Alternatives

Provide alternative language or suggestions for more inclusive and respectful communication when addressing harmful language. This can be a learning opportunity for some and a way to uplift and uphold marginalized communities and voices.

#### 4. Follow up and Offer Support

Target the behavior or words versus the individual. After addressing harmful language, follow up with individuals who may have been impacted and offer support, including checking in privately and providing resources as needed. Engage in educational conversations with individuals who use harmful language as much as possible, promoting awareness of respectful communication expectations, and offering support for their learning and growth to prevent future incidents of harm.



## KEY CONCEPTS

- Proactive Intervention
- Recognition of Impact
- Equity and Respect
- Empowerment



Promoting Prevention.  
Committed to Wellness.

### References

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