

Considerations for Supporting Colleagues & Students and Actions to Take:

Supporting People of Color at Work:

- 1) [3 Things You Should Not Say To Your Black Colleagues Right Now](#) – brief article, please read
 - 1) Do not tell us you are scared to say the wrong thing.
 - 2) Do not tell us “you hope things change soon”.
 - 3) Do not say or expect things to be normal.
- 2) Check on one another and respect people’s readiness or not to talk and engage.
 - 1) Some helpful approaches are:
 - i. “I’ve been thinking about you and wanted you to know.”
 - ii. “I cannot imagine how you are feeling but I wanted you to know I care about you and am here if you want to talk.”
 - iii. “How can I support you? What do you need right now?”
- 3) Things are not normal right now, for any of us. Things are especially traumatic and challenging for people of color at this time.
 - 1) Communities of color, the Black community specifically, have been disparately impacted by COVID-19 in terms of both infection and death. This is a direct result of systemic inequities that have consistently led to lower life expectancy, chronic conditions, co-morbidities, and lack of access to healthcare, quality food, housing, education, transportation, etc.
 - 2) Communities of color have been living with the realities of police brutality and systemic injustice in the criminal justice system for a very long time. This is not new and with video recordings, it has become more traumatic both to see and be inundated with these images constantly. Also navigating the shock and surprise of white people adds an additional layer of stress for our colleagues and students of color. If you want to learn more, [contact our office](#).
- 4) People of Color may need and want space to discuss and reflect with one another. This is nothing against other members of the community. The Office of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion will be hosting listening sessions for people of color and for all community members to come together to process and support one another during these challenging times. Watch your email or check the DEI website for updates.

Having Productive Conversation:

- 1) Most important is to do no harm. The goal of discussion is to increase understanding, not necessarily to agree. If you have a discussion that does not go well or does harm, please [contact](#) the Office of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion.
- 2) Be clear about the goal and purpose of the discussion.
- 3) Start with Guidelines/ground rules to create a space for productive dialogue:
 - a. R – Respect/Risk
 - b. O – Openness/Oops/Ouch

- c. P – Please participate/options is always there to Pass
 - d. E – Education/Escuchar – Spanish for “to listen”
 - e. S – Sensitivity/Support – the group must agree to work together to provide support to those in the discussion for their learning and leaning into discomfort.
- 4) Questions to get the conversation started:
- a. If the goal is to check-in on how people are doing and find out what support they need:
 - i. Acknowledge current events, make sure everyone has basic understanding of what has been happening and the difficulty of navigating all of it while working.
 - ii. Ask: How are you doing? What are you finding most difficult while being at work? How can your leaders and colleagues be supportive of you at this time?
 - b. If the goal is to have a deep level of conversation and allow people to share personal experiences:
 - i. What has been most difficult for you? What emotions are coming up for you? What has you confused or frustrated? For those that feel comfortable sharing, how has what we are seeing and learning about shown up for you in your life? What are your personal experiences? What are we learning as a community? What do you hope comes from all of this?
- 5) Err on the side of trying and be willing to both mess up and apologize
- 6) Give a proper apology:¹
- a. Acknowledging that you did something wrong or hurt someone
 - b. An expression of remorse and acceptance of responsibility
 - c. An action step to make amends or change future behavior

Taking Action:

- 1) All equity and inclusion work starts with you and is on-going. Be willing to learn, reflect on your biases, and participate in discussions. Find ways to learn more about systemic racism, health equity and structural inequities. [Our resource page](#) is a good place to start.
- 2) Get used to being uncomfortable. We cannot create change doing the same things, if you are doing things right, you will feel uncomfortable along the way, keep going.
- 3) Be an Upstander. Say something when you see or hear hurtful comments, or discriminatory behavior. Use the [6 Techniques for Speaking Up](#) to call people IN for a discussion to foster belonging and understanding.
- 4) Participate in actions.
 - a. Know who your local, state and federal representatives are and contact them to voice your concerns and ask questions about their current policies/protocols about your issues of concern. Check your vote registration status, if you're not registered, do so.
 - b. Support rallies, events, protests for Black Lives Matter and systemic reform

- i. COVID-19 related precautions - maintain physical distance, wear a mask, wash your hands, and don't go if you're sick. Some also recommend not yelling or singing, and showering when you return home
 - c. Organize action of solidarity in your community:
 - i. Make signs and go for a walk – talk to your neighbors
 - ii. Chalk the sidewalks
 - iii. Host discussions
 - d. Support actions in other ways if you cannot participate:
 - i. Donate to bail funds and groups who organize actions
 - ii. Donate to organizations that are working on racial equity:
 - 1. [Forward Through Ferguson](#)
 - 2. [Arch City Defenders](#)
- 5) Support local Black owned businesses and events. [This list](#) provides information to get started.

Taking Care of Yourself:

It is vital that you take care of yourself as we navigate these challenging times. Productive learning, discussion and actions to support equity, healing and justice are more difficult when we are not taking care of ourselves. Please visit copingwithcovid.wustl.edu for resources to support well-being; from anonymous hotline support and counseling to mindfulness sessions. Counseling services can support conversations about trauma and racism. As we take care of ourselves we are better equipped to show up for one another.

References:

1. Fleming, Heather S., (2019) *My Black Friend Says... Lessons in Equity, Inclusion, and Cultural Competency*. Independently published.