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THE BYSTANDER CHALLENGE

Moving from Bystander to Upstander

COMPANION LEARNING GUIDE



**NATIONAL
CONFLICT
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CENTER™**



BURST VIDEO:

Building Inclusive Teams

Kathryn Shade,
NCRC Human Resources Director

REFLECT:

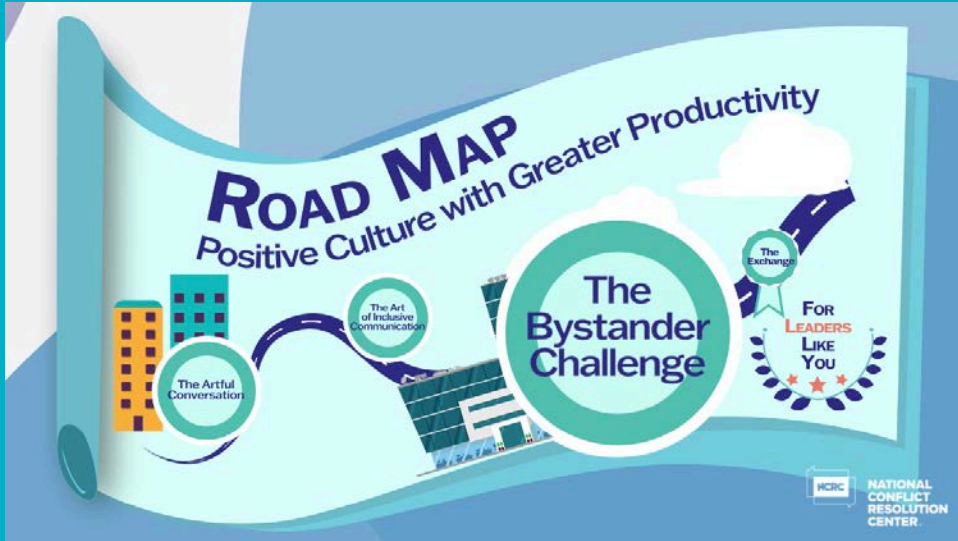
What stood out for you in the video?

JOURNAL: *What do you do to build inclusive teams, either as a formal leader or an informal leader?*

DIALOGUE WITH A TRUSTED COLLEAGUE:

How would addressing microaggressions help to build a sense of being valued in a group?

Overview of the Series



We will do all we can to create a psychologically safe space for you so that you can comfortably share your experiences and perspective.

We also ask that you consider the work of Dr. Carol Dweck of Stanford University in taking the approach of a growth mindset as you participate in the sessions. While each of you is an expert, there is always more to learn!

There will be a series of four sessions.

1. **The ARTful Conversation:** You'll learn how to effectively handle challenging one-on-one conversations. This foundational course lays the groundwork for all subsequent sessions.
2. **The Art of Inclusive Communication:** You'll explore strategies and techniques to embrace and promote inclusivity.
3. **The Bystander Challenge:** You'll learn what to do when you observe microaggressions and how to empower others in your community to become thoughtful upstanders.
4. **The Exchange:** You'll learn a conflict resolution process that helps you lead a problem-solving conversation, focused on collaboration and future success.

Learning Outcomes



NCRC **THE BYSTANDER CHALLENGE**
Moving from Bystander to Upstander

Learning Outcomes

In this workshop, we will explore the impact of **microaggressions** and how to respond to them as leaders.

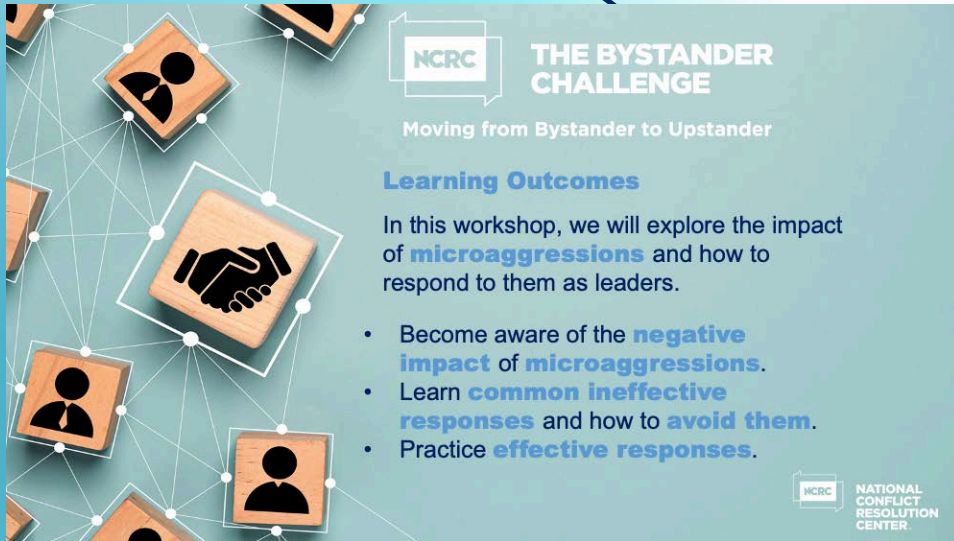
- Become aware of the **negative impact** of **microaggressions**.
- Learn **common ineffective responses** and how to **avoid them**.
- Practice **effective responses**.

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REFLECT

Have you ever witnessed disrespectful behavior and not taken action? What led to this decision?

Learning Outcomes



NCRC **THE BYSTANDER CHALLENGE**

Moving from Bystander to Upstander

Learning Outcomes

In this workshop, we will explore the impact of **microaggressions** and how to respond to them as leaders.

- Become aware of the **negative impact** of **microaggressions**.
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The Bystander Challenge. Our goal in offering this workshop is to help you become an upstander and to encourage others to be upstanders around you. This course does not address the legal issues, corporate policies, protected classes, or other possible ramifications of workplace harassment. Though these topics are important for everyone to know and understand, this course is primarily focused on increasing communication skills of colleagues (bystanders) in the work environment. The power and potential of informed and motivated colleagues can change the dynamics in these situations dramatically.

Helping yourself and other bystanders overcome your understandable concerns when faced with situations in which disrespectful behavior has occurred in the workplace is the first step in creating a community of upstanders.

By raising awareness of the experience of others who are targeted and upstander actions that can be effective in the situation, each of us can make a difference in helping to create a better environment for all—the kind of workplace where people want to work!

Breakout Discussion

BUILDING INCLUSIVE TEAMS

- **Embrace Cultural Humility**
- **Utilize Humble Inquiry**
- **Recognize that Being Inclusive Takes Time and Energy**



BREAKOUT

- **What stood out for you about building inclusive teams?**
- **How does building inclusive teams relate to addressing microaggressions?**

You will have an opportunity to discuss the burst learning video in a small group.

Consider your formal and informal leadership. What role do you have in building inclusive teams?

Engage in a discussion with other workplace leaders about what stood out for you in the burst video.

MICROAGGRESSIONS

The everyday slights, insults, and negative verbal and nonverbal messages—whether intentional or not—that impede your ability to do your work well.

- Melinda Epler



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COMMON MICROAGGRESSIONS

- Assumptions about the individual's background
- Questioning the legitimacy of their position or qualifications
- Disregarding their input, suggestions, or point of view
- Backhanded compliments
- Obvious disrespectful comments, tone, or body language

NOTE: Microaggressions can happen to anyone, but the unfortunate reality is that microaggressions are done more frequently to BIPOC individuals, LGBTQ + individuals, and women.



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According to Dr. Derald Wing Sue, **microaggressions** are the everyday verbal, nonverbal, and environmental slights, snubs, or insults, whether intentional or unintentional, that communicate hostile, derogatory, or negative messages to target persons based solely upon their group membership.

He suggests that there are three types of microaggressions: **Micro-assaults** are most akin to conventional racism (or other isms): they are made consciously. They are explicit derogatory actions that are intended to hurt.

A **micro-insult** is an unconscious communication that demeans a person. For example, asking someone “How did you *really* get your job?” may imply that you believe they got the job because of affirmative action or a quota program.

Minimizing or disregarding the thoughts, feelings, or experiences of a person is referred to as **microinvalidation**. A common example in a collaborative is to ignore a suggestion by a female member in a meeting while supporting a male member stating the same thing.

The Impact of Bullying and Harassment In the Workplace

- ▶ More people are targeted over time, and the behavior of the person responsible escalates in frequency and level of aggression.
- ▶ It causes communication breakdown among employees and managers.
- ▶ The behavior causes psychological harm to the targets and witnesses.
- ▶ It makes everyone feel less safe and that they are likely to be the next target.



DEFINITION

A person who is present at an event or incident but does not take part

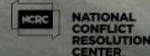
PROBLEM

Seventy-nine percent of individuals have witnessed an incident of discrimination at work in the past five years

ACTION

When nothing is done, it signals agreement with the actions taken and negatively impacts workplace culture

WHAT IS A BYSTANDER?

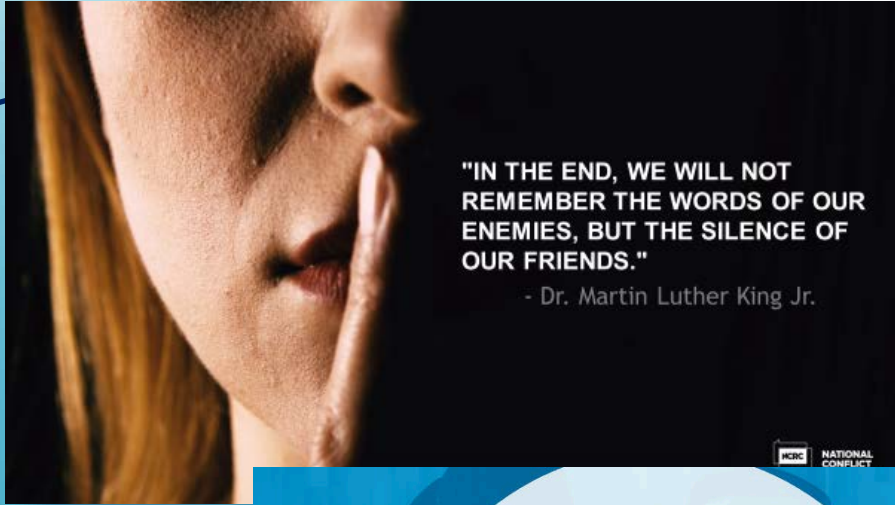


FURTHER LEARNING

In their book, *Back Off! Your Kick-Ass Guide to Ending Bullying @ Work*, authors Catherine Mattice and E.G. Sebastian make the case, through research and case studies, that the impact of harassment in the workplace is profound and troublesome. Rather than it only impacting the **target**, the reality is that the entire work team, morale, productivity, and the bottom line are all negatively affected. Anyone who has ever been in a workplace in which bullying has occurred can attest to the negative atmosphere that is created and the sense of dread that permeates the staff, even for **bystanders**.

It is important to understand and address microaggressions and slights that occur before they turn into harassment. The words, actions, and behaviors may fall short of the official label of harassment yet can cause harm in the work environment.

These points are well worth noting, as they reinforce the need for **upstander** action early on.



BREAKOUTS

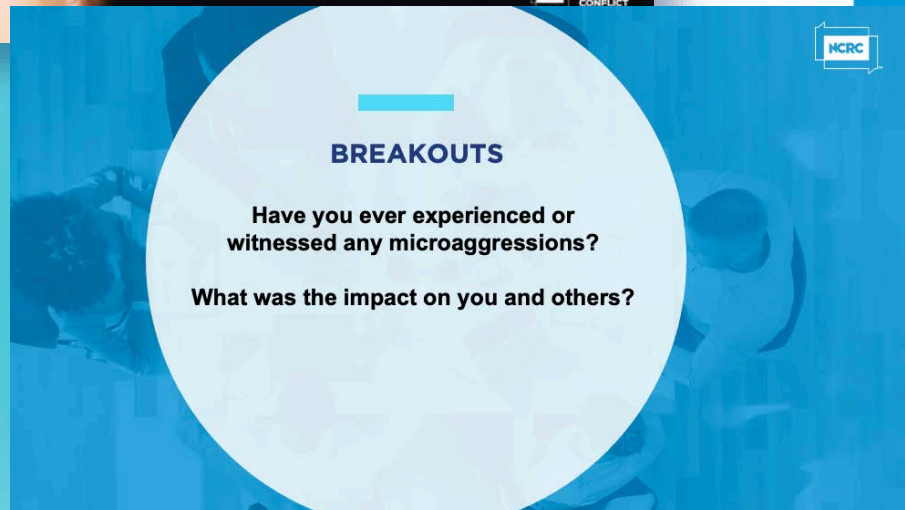
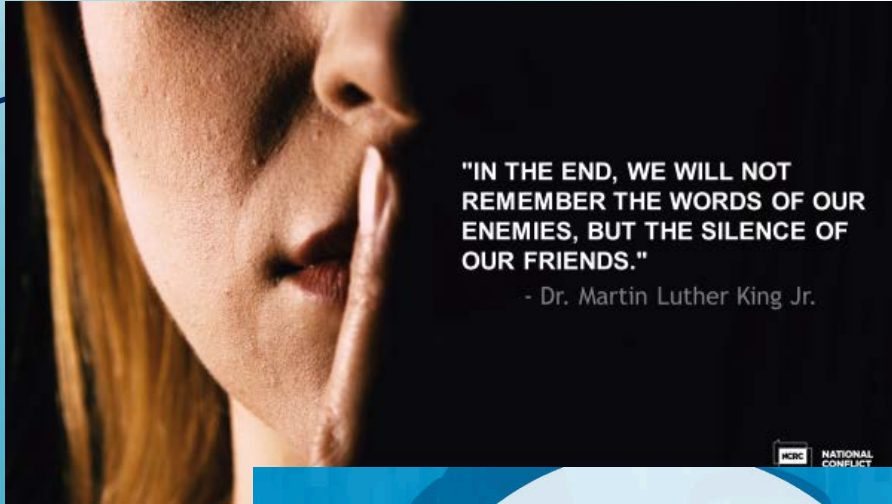
Have you ever experienced or
witnessed any microaggressions?

What was the impact on you and others?

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REFLECT

Consider if you have ever been targeted by microaggressions and/or bullying in the workplace. Did the people around you support you, or were they silent?



When the National Conflict Resolution Center develops workshops, research into the topic is done, analysis of effective approaches to teaching about the topic is performed, and interviews with people are conducted.

In our research in developing the NCRC Bystander Challenge, we interviewed several people who had experienced being a target of microaggressions in the workplace. In these interviews, targets remembered how the encounter made them feel, but what hurt them even more than the microaggression was that their coworkers didn't speak out against the situation. A typical response was "Where were my coworkers? How did they knowingly allow someone to treat me so badly?" The impact of this type of behavior and lack of support is known to cause psychological harm to the target. Conversely, those who did receive support and alliance were able to move forward more successfully from a generally traumatic event.

This quote by Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. captures this unfortunate experience well.

Ineffective Responses

TYPICAL INEFFECTIVE RESPONSES



Accommodate



Avoid



Attack

These ineffective responses can cause problems when the bystander is a colleague. And these responses are even more detrimental when they are done by workplace leaders. Here, the repercussions are far worse, as they send clear messages to all employees who threaten the psychological safety of everyone in the workplace.

When a leader **AVOIDS**, they send a message that this type of disrespectful communication is accepted in the work environment.

When the leader **ACCOMMODATES**, they ask that the team put up with the inappropriate behavior of the person responsible, perhaps because they are otherwise good at their job. Many leaders find it easier to simply ignore this behavior because they value the employee's other contributions and want to accept that "that is just how they are." The leader is communicating that the person responsible is more important than other team members and that the right of others to psychological safety in the workplace doesn't matter. The negative impact on morale is significant in these situations.

ATTACKING clearly sends the message that people cannot make mistakes.

BREAKOUTS

What happens when a leader reacts to microaggressions by...

Avoiding?
Accommodating?
Attacking?

The Real Meaning of Avoiding

"The term bystander connotes being a passive observer. You are an active participant each time you choose not to step in. Each choice in not getting involved is reinforcing the behavior, making you **not an innocent bystander**, but an **active reinforcer**."

- Catherine Mattice
Workplace Bullying Expert



This quote by workplace bullying expert Catherine Mattice is a powerful testament to the dangers of being a bystander in our workplaces.

Being a bystander on the trolley or in a crowd is substantially different than being a bystander in our work environment. The key difference is that you know the work group and you have relationships with your colleagues. With these relationships, there comes more responsibility to help maintain the goodwill and dignity of everyone involved.



MOTIVATION TO BECOME AN UPSTANDER

PERSONAL QUALITIES

Paying attention to how others are treated and using our emotional intelligence to empathize with the experience of others will be the first step toward action. Then we must feel empowered to take that action. Interestingly, according to research by Dr. Adam Zalinsky, Columbia University social psychologist, the biggest factor that leads people to speak up is their moral conviction that they must say something. He has traveled the world researching this topic in a wide variety of circumstances, and his findings indicate that, as moral beings, this drive to speak up is greatest when we recognize that our values are being threatened in a given circumstance. So, that is when we are most likely to voice our concerns.

ENVIRONMENTAL CONDITIONS

The impact of psychological safe environments cannot be underestimated. If we don't feel safe, we will not become an upstander. Other factors that have proven to be important in encouraging upstanders to speak up include a positive culture in which people receive social support for being willing to address tough issues.

PERSONAL VALUES

Acceptance	Family	Leadership	Respect
Caring	Fun	Loyalty	Social Justice
Competence	Gratitude	Open mindedness	Spirituality
Cooperation	Healthy	Order	Stability
Courage	Honesty	Patience	Teamwork
Empathy	Inclusiveness	Perseverance	Trustworthy
Encouragement	Independence	Professionalism	Understanding
Fairness	Integrity	Recognition	Warmth



FURTHER LEARNING

We encourage you to further explore your own values to help you become an upstander. Understanding how our own values play a part in becoming an upstander taking Bystander action can be a useful exercise.

Looking at the list of personal values at left:

1. Consider which ones resonate with you.
2. Pick the three values that you prioritize in your life.
3. Reflect upon how these values are part of your daily life. How do you live these values?
4. Lastly, contemplate how these values might support you becoming an upstander when someone has been disrespected.

What we have found is that each of these values can play a role in helping us become an upstander if we simply take time and effort to recognize our own value system.

Four Effective Responses



There are four effective interventions by **upstanders**. Two of these interventions are in the moment, and two are done after the situation has transpired.

Depending on the issue, the person's role and their personality, the dynamics of the group, and other factors, there will be an upstander response that can be effective for most situations. For workplace leaders, it is especially important for upstander action to occur. Download your guide [HERE](#).

REFLECT

Think about those situations in which you witnessed microaggressions. As you learn about the four effective methods, reconsider which of these actions might have been effective for you in those situations.

Effective Responses in the Moment: Distraction



REFLECT

If you were to use the **Distraction** technique, would you be more comfortable utilizing humor or storytelling?

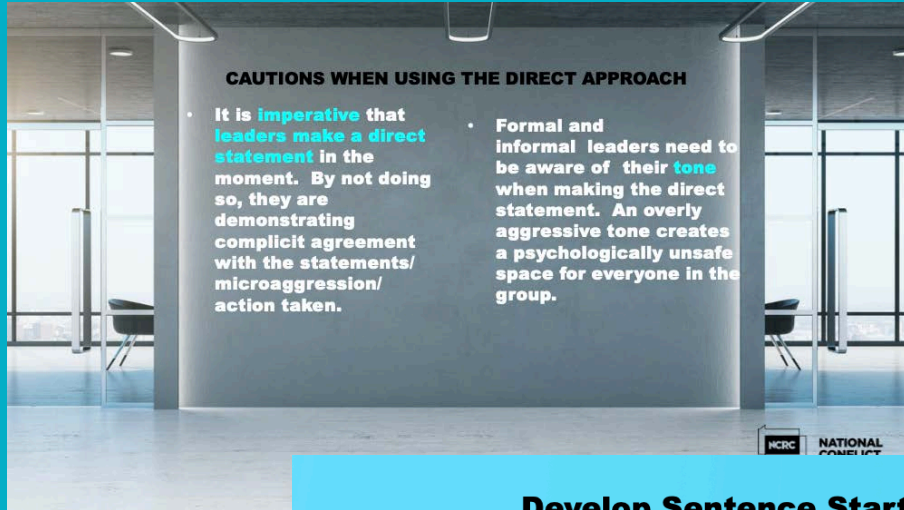
Distraction is a great tool for someone who doesn't feel safe making a direct statement. Many times, they want to do something but don't want to be seen as a problem in the group. This is particularly helpful for those who feel that they are a low-power individual who isn't empowered to make a direct statement. Being able to use the distraction techniques might make a difference in the dynamics at the time that the microaggression occurs.

What about leaders using the **Distraction** method? Even though this approach could be an effective response for peer-to-peer interactions, it is generally seen as an ineffective response for leaders because, by not addressing it directly, the message could be sent that the behavior is acceptable.

Types of Distractions Used by Upstanders

Utilizing humor to lighten the mood. Often, self-deprecating humor is used to take the attention away from the offensive comment about the target and the microaggression that has just occurred.

Storytelling to change the focus. The upstander picks up one element of what was said to change the subject ("That reminds me of the time when I went...").



CAUTIONS WHEN USING THE DIRECT APPROACH

- It is **imperative** that **leaders make a direct statement** in the moment. By not doing so, they are demonstrating **complicit agreement** with the statements/ microaggression/ action taken.
- Formal and informal leaders need to be aware of their **tone** when making the direct statement. An overly aggressive tone creates a psychologically unsafe space for everyone in the group.

Develop Sentence Starters

Informal Leaders

- I just felt something shift in the room. I'm wondering if anyone else did...
- I've been wondering about how we are using [term] in this discussion...
- From my experience/ perspective as [identity]...

Formal Leaders

- Let's do a check-in about what just happened...
- It is important to me that we treat team members with respect, so let's talk about that comment...
- I understand that it is sometimes challenging to ... Yet, everyone should know that my expectations are...

Example of Direct Phrase by Manager

- **INAPPROPRIATE JOKE:** I like the fact that we work on a team where we can laugh together, but we need to be sure we tell jokes that are appropriate for all. Is that clear to everyone?

We have found that many people benefit from developing a few “sentence starters.” These sentence starters help them find the diplomatic response even when triggered slightly. Refining your own to fit your personality, role, and style will help make being an upstander become natural to you.

Why do we promote a diplomatic approach? Because we find that in order to maintain relationships, in order to have a greater impact, in order to maintain positive group dynamics, and for your own sense of integrity, a diplomatic approach is more successful. The person responsible is your colleague, not a stranger. You will be interacting on projects, teams, and work in the future. Burning the bridge to a decent working relationship is very costly.

We created [Ten Tips for Managing Conflict](#) that many find useful to reflect upon and alter their thinking about conflict. One that is pertinent here is to “Ask yourself: How can I tell them what I want to tell them in a way that they can hear it?”

EFFECTIVE RESPONSES

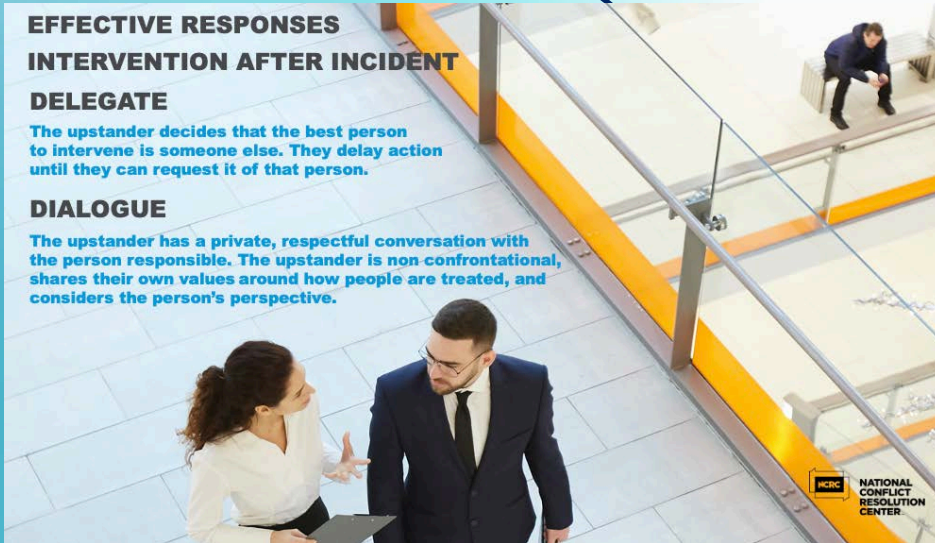
INTERVENTION AFTER INCIDENT

DELEGATE

The upstander decides that the best person to intervene is someone else. They delay action until they can request it of that person.

DIALOGUE

The upstander has a private, respectful conversation with the person responsible. The upstander is non-confrontational, shares their own values around how people are treated, and considers the person's perspective.



Delegation is the decision that the most appropriate person to manage the encounter is not the upstander. The upstander may decide to report the situation to human resources, or they may believe someone else in the organization is better suited to address the issue because of their power in the organization or because of their relationship to the person responsible. Hence, the upstander actively delegates it to that person.

They follow up by talking about their concerns in a private conversation with HR or their colleague who has better rapport with the person responsible. When it is a colleague, the bystander may even ask how they can provide support in planning how to have the conversation. They work together to find the best approach.

If someone delegates management of such an encounter to you, they may want to know what you have done. This is tricky for workplace leaders, since some actions must remain confidential. Letting them know why you need to maintain confidentiality will build trust.

DIALOGUE WITH THE PERSON RESPONSIBLE

- ▶ Opening the Conversation
- ▶ Clarifying Your Concern
- ▶ Closing the Conversation

Dialogue

OPEN THE CONVERSATION

- ✓ Diplomatic
- ✓ Respectful
- ✓ Authentic

CLARIFY YOUR CONCERNS

- ✓ Tell the person what is troubling you without attacking
- ✓ Use neutral language
- ✓ Identify your interests and values
- ✓ Ask questions and listen

CLOSE THE CONVERSATION

- ✓ Appeal to shared values
- ✓ Let them know what you'll do if behavior continues
- ✓ Reinforce working relationship

REFLECT

There are three simple steps to this dialogue. Before reading further, consider how you might:

- Open the Conversation
- Clarify Your Concerns
- Close the Conversation

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Prepare to Dialogue

There are many benefits to a private conversation. It creates space for more thoughtful dialogue between two individuals. It allows the **person responsible** to express their point of view in a safe way and allows the **upstander** to share their view in a nonconfrontational way.

Thoughtful preparation is worth the effort. These conversations can be challenging, so before addressing the issue, take some time to prepare your ideas and how you want to say things, and consider your own emotions in the situation.

This self-care in grounding oneself before dialoguing will help the Upstander remain rational and thoughtful, not take things personally, and remain focused and respectful in the conversation.

OPEN THE CONVERSATION

- ✓ Diplomatic
- ✓ Respectful
- ✓ Authentic

Dialogue: Open the Conversation

How one enters a conversation about someone else's behavior makes a significant difference. If the **upstander** attacks the person responsible, the conversation will likely escalate, with the **person responsible** reacting extremely defensively. We often attack out of understandable anger, but channeling that anger often means being strategic rather than "letting it all out." As suggested earlier, we recommend a diplomatic approach in the conversation. This approach often leads to the best outcome.

As with the **direct approach**, developing some **sentence starters** helps with opening. As leaders, clarity and formality about the conversation will often be necessary.

- *I'd like to meet to talk about something tomorrow.*
- *I wanted to meet to chat about a few things...*

Once in the meeting, building rapport in an authentic way first makes a tremendous difference in creating a comfortable atmosphere. After this, phrases to begin the dialogue that don't start with an attack are helpful.

- *I wanted to talk to you about what happened yesterday.*
- *I have been noticing that ...*

A key aspect of successful communication while giving constructive feedback is the tone of our voice and our control over our body language. If our tone of voice is accusatory, aggressive, or belittling, the likelihood of the situation escalating increases. A firm yet kind voice communicates respect and a willingness to maintain a good working relationship. The other important message that is communicated is one of nonreactivity, which tends to de-escalate the situation.



CLARIFY YOUR CONCERNS

- ✓ Tell the person what is troubling you without attacking
- ✓ Use neutral language
- ✓ Identify your interests and values
- ✓ Ask questions and listen

Dialogue: Clarify Your Concerns

After you have opened the conversation, it is important to identify the issue or situation that concerns you. It could be as simple as referring to the conversation in which the microaggression occurred.

- *“Remember during our meeting yesterday when we were talking about...?”*

In identifying the issue of concern, the approach we would recommend is to simply state the issue without assigning escalating language around it, such as “You were racist when you said...” Instead, use neutral language that simply describes what you heard and what it meant to you. “When I heard you say..., I felt uncomfortable because it could be taken...”

Another way to express your perspective in a nonconfrontational way is to identify your interests and values. If your organization or department has a clear set of values that have been promoted, leaders can use them to clarify expectations. Both neutral language and expressing your interests and values focus on what is true for you, rather than attacking the other person. Most people respond better when this approach is taken.

“I wanted to talk to you about this because one thing that is our value here to accept everyone for who they are and show respect to them.”

Sharing your values and how those values pertain to the situation at hand can help the person responsible understand your perspective better. Though it is difficult, being willing to hear their perspective and acknowledge their point of view can and does help the person move forward.



CLARIFY YOUR CONCERNS

- ✓ Tell the person what is troubling you without attacking
- ✓ Use neutral language
- ✓ Identify your interests and values
- ✓ Ask questions and listen

Dialogue: Clarify Your Concerns Questions

Many times, when Upstanders **clarify their concerns**, it is challenging for them to ask questions that come from an open perspective. When one is upset about what was witnessed,, our questions often sound defensive and aggressive. These defensive questions are often used as attacks or are asked simply to prove that one is right. How a question is asked (tone of voice is not to be underestimated!) is often more important than what (content) is asked. Some types of questions are particularly effective. Others will make progress more difficult.

As much as possible, try to maintain a **curious stance** about the other person's perspective. **Humble inquiry** plays (from The ART of Inclusive Communication) can be useful to adopt here. In this way, your questions will reflect a genuine desire to gain an understanding of their perspective, rather than being a series of questions that antagonize the other person.



Open-ended questions are those that cannot be answered with a simple yes or no response—they invite the person to share more information. Some examples of open-ended questions are: *How do you see the situation? Would you tell me your point of view of what happened? What was your intention? Have you thought that perhaps your intention and the impact could be different?*

There are several advantages to open-ended questions:

- *The person responsible will probably feel more comfortable telling the story without interruptions, and this will help you to establish rapport.*
- *The person responsible will provide the context, so you will hear the story from their viewpoint rather than your own.*

CLOSE THE CONVERSATION

- ✓ Appeal to shared values
- ✓ Let them know what you'll do if behavior continues
- ✓ Reinforce working relationship

Dialogue: Close the Conversation

After you have shared your perspective and heard theirs, it can be very helpful to appeal to any shared values that you have in common: for example, “We both care a lot about this company” or “I know you have a strong work ethic, just like me.”

In addition, for managers and workplace leaders, referring back to organizational or team interests again can be very helpful : for example, “Not only is fair treatment important to me for our team, but also, our company has made a commitment for ensuring psychological safety to everyone who works here.”

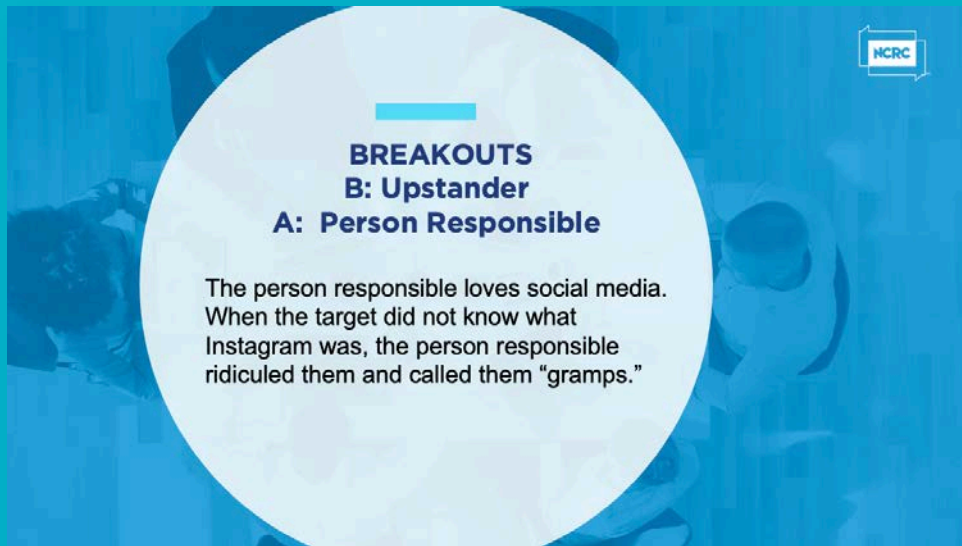
Sometimes the person responsible doesn't want to hear the feedback or reacts in a way that shuts out your perspective. These types of questions may help the person responsible think more deeply about the consequences of their behavior.

- *Have you thought about the impact of these statements on others?*
- *What if someone said that to you?*
- *How do you think our manager might see this situation?*
- *What do you think will happen if the situation doesn't change?*

Leaders looking for ways to improve the behavior may want to assess the situation on several levels, including what would be in their interests, what meet the needs of the other employees, and what would meet the needs of the department and/or company.

Lastly, reinforcing the working relationship helps reset the parameters of working together and helps build toward a positive future working together.





Practice!

You will now have an opportunity to practice dialogue. We have found that the more one practices, the less intimidating these conversations will be. Rather than seeing it as a confrontation to call someone out, you will begin to see it as an opportunity to share your perspective, values, and empathy for others. You can “call the person responsible in”. In social justice circles, **calling in** refers to **“the act of checking your peers and getting them to change problematic behavior by explaining their misstep with compassion and patience.”** (dictionary.com)

So, utilize this practice to gently discuss your concerns with the person responsible. Absorb some of the natural defensiveness, then reinforce your point of view. This is not a battle to be won; it is about being true to your concerns, hearing the person responsible out, and reestablishing rapport.

We cannot guarantee that it will turn out exactly how you want each time, but we can assure you that this approach has been effective for many upstanders. As a workplace leader, at some point you may find that the pattern of behavior by the person responsible is something that is not tolerable or fair to others in the workplace, but many times, this early intervention and reinforcement of workplace values and expectations helps you create the kind of workplace that people want to work in, and a culture of respect is established.

Conclusion

"With a healthy culture, when harassment is observed or experienced, the community takes over and shuts it down collectively, with a message that this behavior will not be tolerated here, by anyone at any level."

- Johnny C. Taylor, SHRM CEO



THE BYSTANDER CHALLENGE

Four Effective Responses

- Distraction
- Direct
- Delegation
- Dialogue

What is one takeaway for you from today's session?

WHAT'S NEXT

- Watch video on Stage One
- Next week: The Exchange



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Thank you for your participation in The Bystander Challenge. We look forward to seeing you in The Exchange.



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Empowering People. Transforming Cultures.