

Competencies for Respectful Communication

AVOID ASSUMPTIONS

When thinking about issues of diversity and interacting with colleagues, always check yourself by asking yourself questions: Am I missing any part of the picture? What do I *think* I know, and what do I *actually* know? Challenge those assumptions!

AVOID SPOKESPERSON SYNDROME

Use “I” language. Ensure that individuals speak from their own experience and not as the representative of an entire group. Be careful that you don’t become a spokesperson yourself...

PLATINUM RULE

Treat others the way *they* would want to be treated. And the only way to know how respect “looks” to someone is to ask.

BE CURIOUS AND ASK RESPECTFULLY

Put your natural curiosity to good use. Often our fear of inadvertently offending someone can become a barrier to asking the necessary questions. You might say something like, “If you have a few minutes today, I’d love to learn more about your thoughts on _____.” This kind of language communicates that you respect your colleagues and are open to understanding a new perspective.

LISTEN ACTIVELY

If you are mentally constructing what you are going to say next while a colleague is still speaking, that signifies that you have stopped listening actively.

DEBUNK STEREOTYPES

Stereotypes can be the worst culprit in creating conflicts and misunderstandings. If you hear key words such as “all,” “always,” “never,” “them,” and “those people.”

ADDRESS BEHAVIOR, NOT BELIEF

All individuals are free to *believe* whatever it is that they believe. However, it’s critical that all employees *behave* respectfully toward one another in the workplace.

ENCOURAGE LEARNING

Learn from every encounter, and use those insights to continue building your knowledge base.

ACKNOWLEDGE AND APOLOGIZE FOR MISTAKES

We have to acknowledge that given the breadth and depth of diversity, we’re all going to make mistakes. But mistakes are important to make – you can learn from them and they provide an opportunity to deepen our understanding of one another – so long as they are dealt with properly. They must first be acknowledged and then you must then take ownership and genuinely apologize for the mistake made.