TANENBAUM
COMBATING RELIGIOUS PREJUDICE
Building a world that respects religious difference

Workplace
Resource

Competencies for Respectful Communication



AVOID ASSUMPTIONS

When thinking about issues of diversity and interacting with colleagues, always check yourself by asking: 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 like to be treated. The only way to know what respect "looks" like 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 you have stopped listening actively.

©2026 TANENBAUM | Center for Interreligious Understanding | 200 Broadway, 3rd Fl, New York, NY 10038 | (212) 967-7707 | www.tanenbaum.org

TANENBAUM
COMBATING RELIGIOUS PREJUDICE
Building a world that respects religious difference

Workplace
Resource

Competencies for Respectful Communication



DEBUNK STEREOTYPES

Stereotypes can be the worst culprit in creating conflicts and misunderstandings. Watch out for keywords 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, all employees must 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

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. You must first acknowledge the mistake, and then you must take ownership and genuinely apologize for the mistake made.

©2026 TANENBAUM | Center for Interreligious Understanding | 200 Broadway, 3rd Fl, New York, NY 10038 | (212) 967-7707 | www.tanenbaum.org