

I'VE BEEN TOLD I'VE SAID SOMETHING OFFENSIVE, WHAT SHOULD I DO?



We've all been there - accidentally said something that's upset someone or stepped out of line without meaning to. It's hard to respond when we know we've messed up and it's tempting to become defensive, or shy away from what happened. Often we don't know why it caused offence and it feels unreasonable or over-sensitive.



Despite this, it can be really helpful to acknowledge and try to understand what it was that caused offence, both for the person who was upset, and to avoid it happening again.



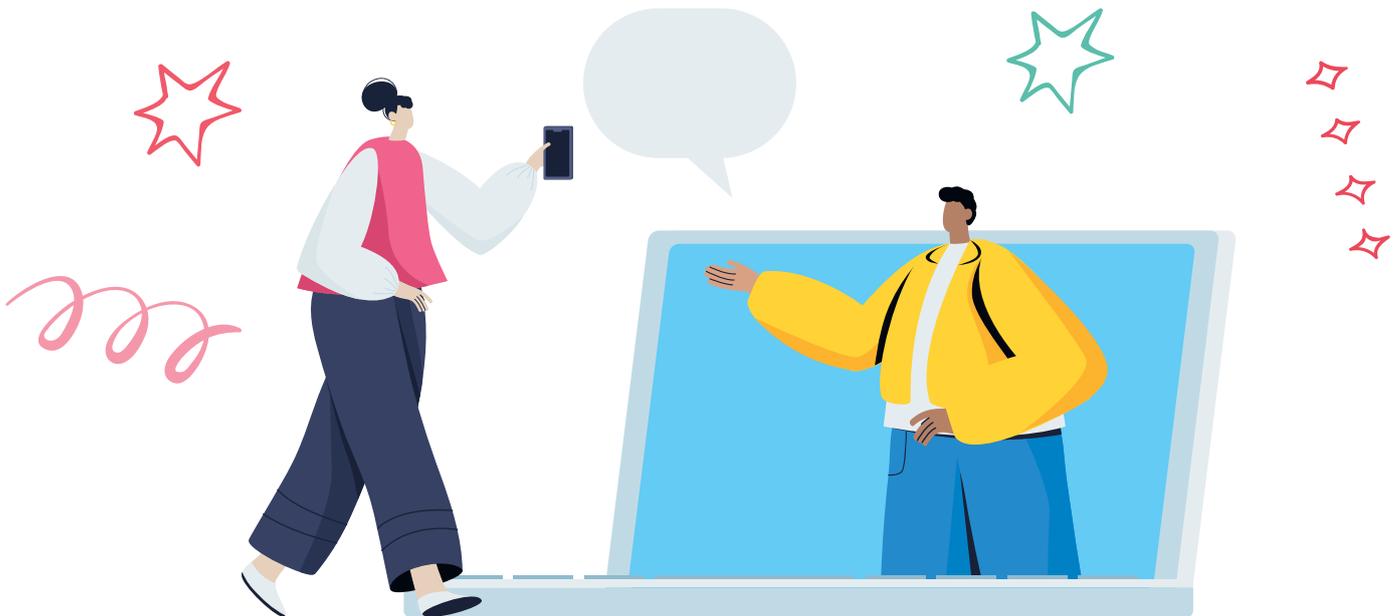
TRY TO...

- Listen and try to understand why it upset them.
- Remember it might be a very sensitive issue for them and you don't know their history. We are all different - something that seems insignificant to one person will be important to another.
- Acknowledge that they are upset and that they have a right to be.
- Apologise for upsetting them, even if you don't feel that what you said was unreasonable. You probably didn't want for it to have a negative effect on them and it's good to communicate this.
- Talk if they want to, but don't push them into talking.
- Take responsibility for your own feelings and needs - find support elsewhere if you are feeling upset. Be ready to do research independently if you really want to find out about this topic, and why what you said might have caused upset.
- Remember - it's a mistake, and you didn't mean to hurt them. We all make mistakes, and the best thing we can do is learn from them.
- If they move the conversation on, move on as well.
- Reflect - Think about what happened, why it caused offence, and how to avoid it happening again. Talk to friends who could help you understand.
- Think about it later, when you're not feeling upset / defensive - perhaps talk it over with friends.

TRY TO AVOID:



- Getting consumed with guilt - it's easy to make mistakes.
- Becoming defensive or dismissive - even if you are feeling uncomfortable, it's not helpful to ignore what they are saying.
- Playing down or dismissing any hurt they are feeling by saying things like "you're overreacting / I never meant to cause offence / it's a normal question".
- Making it about yourself, e.g. by saying how upset you are to have offended them, or how embarrassed you feel.
- Telling other people what happened, without anonymising the person you upset.
- Seeking forgiveness - they might not be ready to give it, and they don't have to. You can apologise but leave it there. They might not want to respond at all.
- Repeatedly asking about it if they don't want to talk or bring it up again without asking them first.
- Pretending it didn't happen if they bring it up.



REMEMBER, TRY NOT TO ARGUE, SHAME PEOPLE OR MAKE THEM FEEL DEFENSIVE.

THE TACTICS ABOVE AIM TO HELP PEOPLE TALK ABOUT THE DIFFERENCES BETWEEN US IN A SENSITIVE WAY. THE TACTICS ABOVE HAVE BEEN SUGGESTED BY NOTTINGHAM PEOPLE THROUGH OVER 1000 HOURS OF CONSULTATION WITH OVER 650 PEOPLE TO UNDERSTAND THEIR LIVED EXPERIENCES OF RESPONDING TO PREJUDICE.



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