

# HEARD SOMETHING OFFENSIVE? WANT TO RESPOND BUT NOT SURE HOW? TRY THESE TIPS...



We all want to change attitudes for the better, but remember, the most effective way to get people to listen to you and change their behaviour, is through talking and listening to each other.

The tactics below have been suggested by Nottingham people. Over 1000 hours of consultation has been conducted with over 650 people to understand their lived experiences of responding to prejudice. Below are some of the key tactics recommended by Nottingham people:



**1. Share your feelings** - Telling the person how their comments made you feel can be much more persuasive than arguing or pointing out inaccuracies and counter-facts (arguing will rarely help to change people's minds). People make emotional decisions and judgements and then justify their position with information that supports it. Even if a 'fact' is completely true (in your opinion) and disproves theirs, people are mistrustful of 'facts and figures'. Personal stories or feelings, however, can't be argued with and are less threatening, but hopefully will touch people emotionally. This means you don't need all the facts to have a good, powerful conversation that changes someone's mind! Just share how the person has made you feel.

**2. Try to connect** - Try to find common ground, something you both agree on, and go from there. People are more likely to listen to your views if you start by finding a connection with them, no matter how small.

**3. Try to listen** - Ok we know this is hard! Especially if you don't like what you're hearing. But try to show respect and acknowledge other people's views (even if you don't agree with them). Everybody has a different story that has led to their view - try remember that. It might help to reframe what they've said to notice the feelings and needs they are expressing and respond to that.

**4. Avoid blaming** - Another hard one! But if you make people feel stupid, guilty or judged they will just become defensive (they'll be less likely to listen to you and it'll be harder to change their behaviour). Guilt, judgements, shame and blame just close people down. It can even entrench them further into their views. Try and find a way of exploring the contentious viewpoint without them having to sacrifice their dignity or sense of identity.



**5. Offer a different perspective - Encourage them to think differently! Asking questions can be really effective.** Rather than telling a person their statement is wrong, ask questions or share feelings that help the person to see what they've said from a different viewpoint or value. For example, ask what the impact of their comment might be on a particular person or share your feelings, or ask what would happen if everyone thought like that.

## ALSO REMEMBER...

- **We all make mistakes. People do often regret the things they say, so people can retract and apologise.** It is ok to change our minds or retract something that came out wrong.
- **Vulnerability and humility are really powerful. Making yourself out to be an expert won't necessarily win you respect.** Allowing yourself to be vulnerable, by sharing how you feel, can take bravery on your part. But it is often a more powerful response to prejudice than arguing. If you make the other person feel inferior, they are less likely to take challenge, compared to if they feel respected and like an equal.
- **Challenges to someone's identity or core beliefs are very threatening.** Try and separate the specific statement from the person's identity, or something you know they won't be able to let go of.
- **Everyone needs to feel like they are winning.** If someone feels that they might be shown to be wrong, or are in an 'argument' or 'debate' that they might lose, they may become defensive.
- **The context is really important.** It will massively affect what is or isn't possible in any given conversation - it's ok to accept it's not the appropriate time for a conversation, and to adapt your methods accordingly.
- **Keep yourself safe, emotionally and physically.** Remember you always have options and you can make a judgement how to respond depending on the context. You don't have to respond in every situation.
- **Know yourself.** Remember any advantages you may have had in life might make it difficult to understand other people's sensitivities and situations.

ALWAYS REMEMBER TO STAY SAFE! ONLY ENGAGE WITH PEOPLE IF IT FEELS SAFE.  
HATE CRIME AND INCIDENTS CAN BE ANONYMOUSLY REPORTED TO THE POLICE BY  
CALLING 101 OR AT [WWW.REPORT-IT.ORG.UK](http://WWW.REPORT-IT.ORG.UK)



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