

SEEN OFFENSIVE COMMENTS ONLINE? WANT TO RESPOND BUT NOT SURE HOW? TRY THESE TIPS...

Online conversations can be a difficult space to change attitudes for the better. Remember, the most effective way to get people to listen to you and change their behaviour, is through talking and listening to each other. This isn't always easy online!

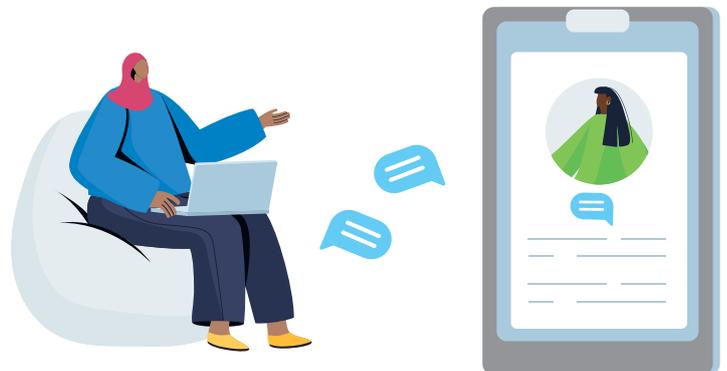
The tactics below have been suggested by Nottingham people. Over 1000 hours of consultation has been conducted with over 650 people to understand their lived experiences of responding to prejudice. Below are some of the key tactics recommended by Nottingham people:



1. The internet is not a great place to talk! At some level, humans are hard-wired to get along with the people around us, or at least to try. This is strongest in face to face conversations where eye contact can be made. But talking on the internet, even texting with someone you know, can put enough distance between us to disrupt that hard-wiring.

2. The internet intensifies everything without context. There are a number of reasons for this:

- We when we talk face to face, our body language and the tone of our voices, can convey a lot of meaning and give context to our words - online this context is lost.
- Also online the text of comments is often written to be very short, not even full sentences, so it can seem very blunt.
- Online we are more distanced from the impact of our comments and the hurt that our comments might cause. This is helpful to remember when you are feeling very hurt or angered by something you've read. The person might not have meant to cause that hurt. It's also important to remember that what you write can hurt people too.



- 3. Humans not Trolls.** Referring to someone as a 'troll' makes us forget there is a person on the other side of the screen, who has engaged in conversation for a reason. They have feelings, even if we don't agree with their statements. You can show empathy without justifying what they said and try to understand why they might have said it. This might be their only opportunity to talk and explore their own opinions safely. Remember that the other person might be having a hard time. Don't be scared to show that you are a human with feelings too.
- 4. Build connection and show respect.** Remind them (and yourself) of the things you have in common and the things that you share. Connection is really important. If you don't know them, is there another way of building connection, by recognising they are upset or showing them you value their input. You could thank them for taking time to share their views and, in return, ask them to listen to yours.
- 5. Don't attack them, especially on their public profile.** Personal attacks make people defensive and escalate an argument. Pulling someone apart online is not effective. Instead of calling someone an idiot or pointing out why they're wrong in a public thread, move the conversation elsewhere and tell them why you are upset by what they said. Help them to understand and change their perspective.
- 6. Let people back down gracefully.** If they delete a post, let them retract it gracefully instead of pointing it out, as it shows they've reflected. This is a positive step.
- 7. Think who your audience is.** Remember the person you are talking to and what might motivate them to change their perspective, rather than writing for the benefit of people who already agree with you.
- 8. Move the conversation elsewhere.** If you can, take it offline. If you know the person, could you arrange to meet them for a coffee? Or if not, you could try sending a private message to engage them respectfully in dialogue.
- 9. Stay safe.** Just because something is online, it doesn't mean it doesn't hurt when we hear something upsetting. Recognise that your personal limitations aren't the same as someone else's and that engaging with different people does not mean engaging with abuse. You can report online hate just like you would report hate in other situations.

HERE ARE SOME HELPFUL PHRASES TO RESPOND TO OFFENSIVE COMMENTS...

- Why did you write that?
- Where did you learn that?
- What do you mean by that?
- That could come across as very hurtful
- How do you think someone would feel reading that?
- I'm worried hearing you say this because...



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



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