

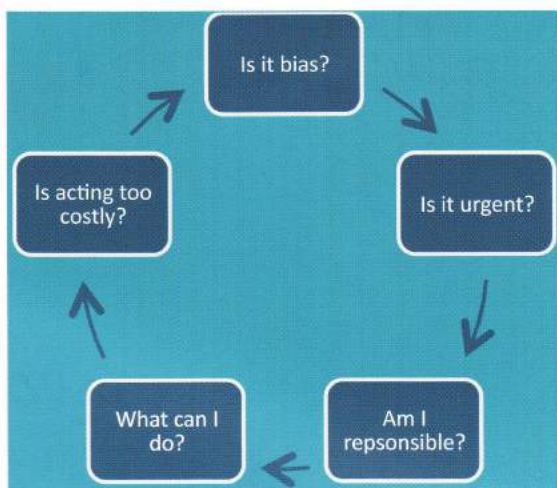


Stepping up – unbiassing work

become an active bystander and contribute to a culture of inclusion

Jan Peters caught up with Stephanie Goodwin following her interactive keynote presentation at the 2017 WEPAN Conference in Colorado in June. The article describes the CPR model and practical steps to become an active bystander.

How many times have you cringed at someone's behaviour or comments? Or perhaps you have overheard, or been the



recipient yourself, of a back handed compliment: “you’re contributing well, for a part-timer”. Summarised as micro-aggressions, on their own each of these incidents, for that is what they are, seems unobtrusive, casual and most likely to be dismissed as not intending to cause offence or discomfort.

Research shows that the target of these behaviours will rarely speak up through concern of being labelled a complainer or whinger or even dismissing the comment or behaviour themselves as being inconsequential. The reality is that for each behaviour/comment it becomes harder to speak up in any effective way. Perhaps the target would be dismissed as ‘not being able to take the heat’ of being the butt of a joke. While an isolated comment might be forgivable, repetition leads to reinforcement of the role of target and perpetrator(s). This reinforcement has additional impact when the perpetrator is in the more senior, powerful role. What can you do?

As a witness (bystander) to any of these behaviours you are able to affect the outcome, and so are your colleagues. Having discussions around different situations can help people be ready for when they encounter it as a bystander or target.

Intervention practice

How an intervention is made will depend upon the context, the rank and relative roles of those involved and what happened.

How do we speak up? The CPR⁽¹⁾ (Confronting Prejudice Response) model can help you and your colleagues to communicate about how and when to intervene. Individual responses to these questions will shape how you respond.



HAVE YOU EVER WITNESSED?...

- A person being continually interrupted by others in a meeting?
- Male colleagues making eye contact with each other in a meeting, yet avoiding eye contact with the female(s) / minority colleague?
- People not listening to a female colleague – maybe checking their phone when she is speaking
- Negative body language towards a non-white or female colleague?

Knowledge, ideas and practice are king (or queen) when it comes to making an intervention. Having had time to consider how you might intervene will add *'intervention ammunition'* to your toolkit. You can also help your colleagues build up their own personal armoury by creating scenarios and having open discussions. Use real situations and cover the following criteria:

- Who is involved
- What happened?
- Who was the perpetrator and who was the target?
- What was the context of the situation?

Four ways you can intervene

If we believe that each and every one of us can interrupt then each of us needs to consider how we can achieve the right outcome. What are the methods that enable an effective, yet non-aggressive challenge? How do we remain not silent?

Some examples of things you can do:

- Question or interrupt: "Excuse me for interrupting, I think you might find that Fareena said the same thing five minutes ago."

- Arouse dissonance: (take a gulp) "I'm surprised to hear you say that as... father of two daughters."
- Disagree: "I have to say, I really don't agree with you. I believe that...."
- Express emotions: "I am upset by..."

And sometimes, actions speak louder than words. One raised eyebrow or a steely stare over your spectacles can cause the perpetrator to pause and reflect on what they have said.

The important thing, is for you to stand up and help your colleagues feel confident in being able to be an active bystander as well.

1. <https://goo.gl/YCVbjt>

"In the end, what will hurt most is not the words of our enemies, but the silence of our friends."

Martin Luther King

Some outline scenarios for discussions

Team meetings are often lively and combative. Florence consistently avoids engaging and prefers to respond later.

You see someone getting credit for something another colleague said earlier in a meeting.

You notice that someone is repeatedly interrupted in a meeting

In the hall a colleague mentions Sarah has potential, if only she could learn to tone it down a bit and not be so abrasive

You hear a team lead scold a new employee for mistakes on a project, and that they need to stop making errors as they are not tolerated – especially in these high visibility projects.

You recommend an employee you're sponsoring for an opportunity, but get the response "we're not sure she's the right fit; she's not really a natural leader"