



## **First, we *Listen*.**

As stated in the Providers' Council's *Call to Action on Racial Equity*, one of the first things we can do to support communities of color, our staff of color and other populations is to ***listen***.

When listening to friends, colleagues, clients or others in the community talk about racism and inequity we want to do so openly and honestly. We must remember that this is challenging (and often uncomfortable) work, but it's necessary for understanding and eliminating racism, or the belief of such, in our organizations and communities. We ask you to ***listen***, but also to encourage different voices to speak up, to provide safe spaces for dialogue, and, as the listener, to be aware of your own bias and discomfort.

Some key points to remember when listening:

- **Acknowledge that you may have moments of discomfort.** Being uncomfortable isn't always a bad thing, especially if you are used to feeling comfortable.
- **Provide space for everyone to have a voice.** Make sure everyone has the opportunity to speak up if they would like to.
- **Come with an open mind, ready to learn.** We are all here to grow and learn together, it's important to remember we all start from different places.
- **Resist the temptation to jump in.** When listening to others share their experiences and emotions make sure they feel heard and acknowledged.
- **Treat others (and the conversation) with respect.** Speak in calm and respectful tones, the way you would want to be spoken to. Be present and fully engaged in the conversation.
- **Use "I" statements and only speak towards your own experience.** Do not expect others to speak on behalf of a specific group they may or may not identify with.
- **Avoid using 'Right' and 'Wrong'.** Labeling someone's beliefs or experiences as 'wrong' is unproductive. Instead, refer back to speaking from one's personal experience.
- **Use common definitions and language.** It can be helpful to establish a common language or share a glossary of definitions before any conversation. (Council's glossary referenced below)
- **Be mindful of power dynamics.** Recognize that some voices and identities have been given privilege while others have been discriminated against. When listening, be aware of your own privileges and how they may impact your biases.
- **Remember: we all make mistakes.** Consider using the "oops/ouch" framework when addressing offensive statements.
- **Practice self-care.** Your health and wellbeing is important. Make sure to remove yourself from conversations when you need to.

### Resources for listening:

[\*Guide to Respectful Conversations\*](#) (Repair the World)

[\*Listen First Project – Tips for Conversations\*](#)

[\*Listen First Project – What is Listening?\*](#)

[\*Talking About Race\*](#) (National Museum of African American History & Culture)

[\*Finding Confidence in Conflict\*](#) (Christian, Kwame, TedEX video)

[\*Race, Equity & Inclusion Glossary\*](#) (Providers' Council, 2019)

[\*Guidelines for Being Strong White Allies\*](#) (Racial Equity Tools, 2006)

[\*The 8 R's of Talking About Race: How to Have Meaningful Conversations\*](#) (Smith, 2015)

[\*A Parent's Guide to Discussing Racism\*](#) (Social Justice Solutions, 2019)

[\*Oops/Ouch Framework explained\*](#) (James Madison University)

As we prepare ourselves to **listen** when talking race and inequity within our organizations, it's also important to consider *how* we create spaces and opportunities for staff to share their experiences. You want everyone to feel safe and confident when sharing personal thoughts and experiences. Below are some resources to help you create spaces to host useful conversations, engage in dialogue, and collect important feedback from staff.

### Resources for starting conversations:

[\*Dare to Dialogue: Creating Safe Spaces to Talk about Race\*](#) (Sphinx Organization, 2019)

[\*Conversation Guide: Talking about Racism, Racial Equity and Racial Healing\*](#) (Day of Racial Healing, 2019)

[\*Make Your Meetings a Safe Space for Honest Conversation\*](#) (Harvard Business Review, 2019)

[\*Dialogue for Affinity Groups\*](#) (Racial Equity Tools, 2008)

### Resources for creating organizational surveys:

[\*Race Matters: Organizational Self-Assessment\*](#) (Annie E. Casey Foundation, 2006)

[\*Anti-Racist Organizational Development\*](#) (Dismantling Racism Project, 2018)

[\*Moving a Racial Justice Agenda: Organizational Assessment: Are You Ready?\*](#) (Dismantling Racism Project, 2018)

[\*Diversity & Inclusion Survey Templates\*](#) (SurveyMonkey)

[\*Sample diversity and inclusion questions for employee surveys\*](#) (AICPA)

Most importantly: don't be afraid to ask for help! Most of us are new to this work and aren't experienced facilitators. Reach out to diversity and equity consultants and trainers to help you host these important conversations when you feel it's appropriate.

*First, we listen. Then, we learn.* Soon we'll be compiling useful resources on our next action step:  
***Educate ourselves, our staff and our communities on systemic inequity and racial oppression.***

Thank you for joining us on this essential journey. We hope you find these resources useful and important to your own efforts. Please reach out if you have any additional resources to share or comments on our work at the Council. And thank you in advance for your commitment to **listen**. As we listen, we learn. And as we learn, we can begin to enact change in ourselves and our communities. For more information, email [info@providers.org](mailto:info@providers.org).

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