

ACC

DIVERSITY and INCLUSION



GUIDE TO DISCUSSING RACISM, RACE AND ETHNICITY IN PROFESSIONAL SETTINGS

Adapted from Northwell Health's guide, "Discussing racism, race and ethnicity in the workplace"

PURPOSE

The ACC is an organization that respects and celebrates our individual differences. We strive to lead in diversity, equity and inclusion and seek to foster a supportive and inclusive culture within our organization and in the cardiovascular community. We know the benefits of embracing the uniqueness of each individual and the impact of inclusion in improving collaboration and advancing innovation. As a member-driven organization, we seek to provide tools our members can use within our organization but also in their own communities and spheres. Of note, while this document is focused on race, racism and ethnicity, much of the information also applies to other difficult conversations, including topics of diversity, equity and inclusion.

INTENDED AUDIENCE

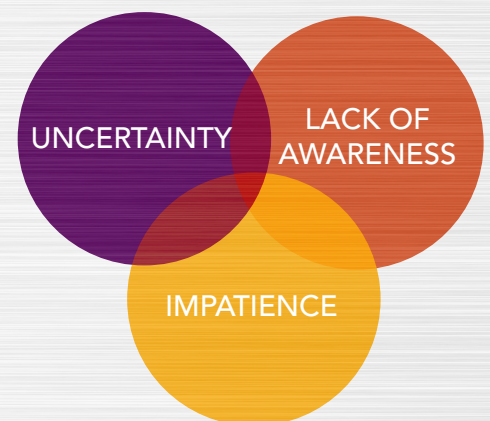
This guide was created for all leaders to help prepare for facilitated conversations with peers or groups about racism, race and ethnicity in professional settings. The document highlights the best practices on what leaders can do to prepare for a discussion, techniques that can be used during discussion to foster an open dialogue and the steps you need to take following a discussion to continue the dialogue.

THE VALUE OF INCLUSIVE CONVERSATIONS AND ACTIONS

The goal of inclusive conversations is to create a culture in which every team member and patient is treated with dignity, respect, and fairness, and feels welcomed, valued and heard. However, while leaders strive for this goal, there exist three main obstacles for leaders in terms of addressing questions/topics of race equity, which are outlined in the figure to the right.

One of the first steps in order for leaders to engage in these critical conversations is to spend some time learning about the issues, such as how structural and systemic racism have impacted our professional community, local community and health care in general. There are many internal ACC and external resources, which can be found at the end of this document, to help prepare and guide the approach to these conversations. This guide offers insight into how individuals may be feeling and reacting to past and/or current events.

OBSTACLES IN ADDRESSING RACE EQUITY



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PREPARING FOR A CONVERSATION

1. Do your research.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• If there is a specific incident (e.g. the killing of George Floyd) you would like to discuss, make sure you understand the facts of the event, what you do and don't know.• It is critical for the leader to understand the privilege that shapes their world view and to educate themselves about what they need to learn and/or unlearn to be an advocate and ally.
2. Consider reaching out to your site human resources partner or diversity and inclusion officer to help you prepare for the conversations.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Ask questions, conduct mock conversations and review talking points with your site or D&I champion.
3. Understand some basics about the forms of racism.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Common types and definitions of racism can be found in the appendix of this document.
4. Be prepared to talk about shared values of justice, opportunity for all and fairness/health equity, but also be prepared to hear counter-narratives.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Articulate the shared values of justice, opportunity for all, fairness and health equity at the start of the conversation.• Understand some individuals may not want to talk about unequal opportunity or the existence of racism and thus may provide a counter-narrative. Different individuals are on different spectrums of the racial journey, we don't have to come from the same place to move forward. Just remember this will be an open environment.• Explain how discrimination and unequal opportunity harm people and how systemic biases affect all of us from achieving our full potential.
5. Approach the conversation with respect and empathy.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Respect the struggles individuals may have gone through to get where they are today, their narratives, and the pain and oppression they have experienced. Coming from a respectful place and letting each individual know you are there to actively listen, learn and understand can help navigate challenging and difficult conversations.• Also, respect an individual's choice to not share or actively participate in such a discussion.
6. Approach the conversation with an open mind – get rid of pre-conceptions.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Again, acknowledge what you don't know and the openness to learn. Express that everyone is here to learn more about different perspectives.• Bring compassion and vulnerability to the conversation.• Be prepared to be the role model for the conversation via your actions and set the tone.
7. Create the right environment.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Hold the conversation in a confidential space that allows individuals to feel comfortable discussing sensitive/difficult topics.• Set ground rules for conversation, letting individuals know they can feel safe to speak without judgement. Discussions must be based on mutual respect with active/deep listening and disagreement can occur but no disrespect should come from this.• Ask questions but also allow individuals time to respond. Consider allowing ten seconds to give individuals time to reflect and respond.



WHAT YOU SHOULD DO OR SAY DURING THE CONVERSATION

- Lead with shared values.
- When discussing specific incidents, acknowledge the situation or incident and focus on facts.
- Acknowledge the difficulty of the conversation and validate individual's feelings. Be aware of emotions in the room.
- Acknowledge that none of us will have all the answers, but that a willingness to be educated and informed, and hear team members' voices, will help us grow individually and as an organization.
- Ask open-ended questions; ensure all participants are included and have a chance to speak.
- Listen and be open to questions.
- Discuss the organizational stance on harassment and discrimination and the specific incidents addressed in your discussion.
- Let it be known why you felt it was important to discuss the topic.
- Give individuals specific steps to take to help foster a more inclusive environment.
- Allow everyone time to process and grieve, if needed. If things become heated or people become defensive, have everyone pause and take a few deep breaths together and allow emotions to settle before moving on with conversation.
- Bring the conversation to a close; thank everyone for participation and openness in the conversation and be available for any follow up.

WHAT YOU SHOULD DO **AFTER THE CONVERSATION**

- Reflect on the conversation, stories and experiences that were shared.
- Set up one-on-one conversations with team members to give them time to process the conversation and events and have dedicated time to discuss it with you if they need to.
- Seek out peers who come from different backgrounds from your own (different gender, different race, etc.) and learn about their background and experiences.

/// Your biggest ally and cheerleader may not look like you. **You must be open to the help and support of others from different backgrounds** that truly are invested in your well-being and success. ///

Annette Ansong, MD, FACC

The American College of Cardiology (ACC)

is committed to improving diversity and inclusion within the cardiovascular workforce and the College's leadership and membership, and recognizes the success of its mission to transform cardiovascular care and improve heart health is dependent on including people, as members and as leaders, who provide a diversity of backgrounds, experiences, ideas and perspectives. ACC's Strategic Plan includes a robust diversity and inclusion strategy, intended to increase diversity within the cardiovascular workforce and ensure that cardiology and the ACC are seen as inclusive and welcoming.

DEFINITIONS OF RACISM:

EXPLICIT RACISM: Overt and often intentional and practiced by individuals and institutions that openly embrace racial discrimination and hold prejudicial attitudes toward racially defined groups.

IMPLICIT RACISM: Refers to an individual's unconscious biases when making judgements about people from different racial and ethnic groups.

STRUCTURAL RACISM: A system in which public policies, institutional practices, cultural representations and other norms perpetuate racial group inequality across institutions and society.

INSTITUTIONAL RACISM: Discriminatory treatment, unfair institutional policies and practices that create inequitable opportunities and impacts based on race.

INTERPERSONAL RACISM: The expression of racism between individuals.

PERSONAL RACISM: Private beliefs, prejudices and ideas that individuals have about the superiority of one race over another.

SELECT RECOMMENDED RESOURCES

1. The [ACC Diversity and Inclusion page](#) is a great starting point for the cardiovascular community
2. Northwell Health's Guide: [Discussing racism, race, and ethnicity in the workplace](#)
3. Forbes: [How to Have a Courageous Conversation About Race](#)
4. Ted Talk: [How to Overcome Biases? Walk Boldly Toward Them](#)
5. Book: [White Fragility: Why It's So Hard for White People to Talk about Racism](#) by Robin DiAngelo. Beacon Press; 2018.

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THE AMERICAN COLLEGE OF CARDIOLOGY WOULD LIKE TO RECOGNIZE

Craig Beavers, PharmD, FACC, Jennifer Mieres, MD, FACC, and Robert Roswell, MD, FACC for their support in adapting this guide from Northwell Health's Discussion Guide on Racism, Race and Ethnicity in the Workplace. Please email diversity@acc.org with any questions.