



"Our lives begin to end the day we become silent about things that matter." - *Martin Luther King Jr.*

## Six Steps to Speak Up!

**Your brother routinely makes anti-Semitic comments.** Your neighbor uses the N-word in casual conversation. Your co-worker ribs you about your Italian surname, asking if you're in the mafia. Your classmate insults something by saying, "That's so gay."

And you stand there, in silence, thinking, "What can I say in response to that?" Or you laugh along, uncomfortably. Or, frustrated or angry, you walk away without saying anything, thinking later, "I should have said *something*."

**1. Be Ready.** You know another moment like this will happen, so prepare yourself for it. Think of yourself as the one who will speak up. Promise yourself not to remain silent.



"Summon your courage, whatever it takes to get that courage, wherever that source of courage is for you," said Dr. Marsha Houston, chair of the Communication Studies Department at the University of Alabama.

To bolster that courage, have something to say in mind before an incident happens. Open-ended questions often are a good response. "Why do you say that?" "How did you develop that belief?"

**2. Identify the Behavior.** Sometimes, pointing out the behavior candidly helps someone hear what they're really saying: "Janice, what I hear you saying is that all \_\_\_\_\_ are lazy" (fill in whatever the slur happens to be). Or, "Janice, you're classifying an entire ethnicity in a insulting way. Is that what I hear you saying?"

When identifying behavior, however, avoid labeling, name-calling or the use of loaded terms. Describe the behavior; don't label the person.

"If your goal is to communicate, loaded terms get you nowhere," said Dr. K.E. Supriya, associate professor of communications at the University of Wisconsin, Milwaukee, and an expert in the role of gender and cultural identity in communication. "If you simply call someone a racist, a wall goes up."



**3. Appeal to Principles.** If the speaker is someone you have a relationship with — a sister, friend or classmate for example — call on their higher principles: "Bob, I've always thought of you as a fair-minded person, so it shocks me when I hear you say something that sounds so bigoted (prejudiced or intolerant)."

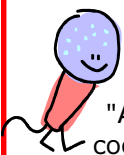
"Appeal to their better instincts," Houston said. "Remember that people are complex. What they say in one moment is not necessarily an indication of everything they think."

**4. Set Limits.** You cannot control another person, but you can say, "Don't tell racist jokes in my presence anymore. If you do, I will leave." Or, "My house is not a place I allow bigoted remarks to be made. I can't control what you say outside of this space, but here I ask that you respect my wishes." Then follow through.

"The point is to draw a line, to say, 'I don't want you to use that language when I'm around,'" Bob Carolla, spokesman for the National Alliance for the Mentally Ill. "Even if attitudes don't change, by shutting off bad behavior, you are limiting its contagion. Fewer people hear it or experience it."

**5. Find an Ally/Be an Ally.** When frustrated in your own campaign against everyday bigotry, seek out like-minded people and ask them to support you in whatever ways they can.

And don't forget to return the favor: If you aren't the first voice to speak up against everyday bigotry, be the next voice.



"Always speak up, and never be silenced out of fear," said Shane Windmeyer, founder and coordinator of Campus PrideNet and the Lambda 10 Project. "To be an ally, we must lead by example and inspire others to do the same."

**6. Be Vigilant.** Remember: Change happens slowly. People make small steps, typically, not large ones. Stay prepared, and keep speaking up. Don't risk silence.

"There's a sense of personal disappointment in having not said something when you felt you should have," said Ron Schlittler, acting executive director of the national office of Parents, Families and Friends of Lesbians and Gays.

Carolla put it this way: "If you don't speak up, you're surrendering part of yourself. You're letting bigotry win."

Whatever situation you're in, remember these six steps to help you speak up against everyday bigotry. In any situation, however, assess your safety, both physical and emotional. There is a risk, and that must be acknowledged as you make your own choice to Speak Up!

Courtesy of [www.tolerance.org](http://www.tolerance.org)

☐Tolerance implies no lack of commitment to one's own beliefs.

Rather it condemns the oppression or persecution of others." - *John F. Kennedy, 35th US President*

# NATIONAL MENTORING MONTH

January 2012 will mark the 11<sup>th</sup> anniversary of National Mentoring Month. Research has shown that volunteer mentors can play a powerful role in reducing drug abuse and youth violence as well as boosting academic achievement. Mentors help to build young people's character and confidence, expand their universe, and help them navigate a path to success. For more information, visit [www.nationalmentoringmonth.org](http://www.nationalmentoringmonth.org).

As a role model and friend, you can make it easier for a younger person to adjust to school and ask for help. If your school has a mentoring program, get involved. If it doesn't, ask your advisor how you can start one.

## TIPS FOR MENTORS

### If you are a mentor, you are...

**a friend.** Mentors and mentees do things that are fun and engaging. They support each other, teach each other, and help each other. Building a close relationship with your mentee will help her build better relationships with others in her life as well. By being a good listener and engaging in genuine conversations with your mentee, you are helping him develop important life skills.

**a role model.** You are expected to set a good example to the mentee for how to live your life. This is not the same as being perfect. Rather, it is about acknowledging your imperfections and sharing your strengths.

**a nurturer of possibilities.** See the gifts and strengths of your mentee and help him flourish personally. You should help your mentee channel his gifts toward actions that make him a resource to others.

Adapted from *Mentoring for Meaningful Results: Asset-Building Tips, Tools, and Activities for Youth and Adults*. Copyright © 2006 by Search Institute<sup>SM</sup>

### ENGAGING IN GOOD CONVERSATION

Conversations are the foundation of strong relationships, and strong relationships are the goal of meaningful mentoring. Engaging in the art of conversation does not always come naturally to people, and for many young students it can be a territory in which they have yet to build skills.

Below are some tips for making conversations work, as well as some conversation starters to spark interesting discussions. Hopefully, they not only give you and your mentee something else to chat about once in a while, but also give you a chance to get to know each other a little better.

- **Keep it going.** It's one thing to ask a question and then sit back to wait for an answer. It is another thing to really engage in a conversation. Asking follow up questions or providing open-ended responses are great ways to keep the conversation going. The idea is not to debate an answer but to learn more. Try some of these:  
"That's cool. Tell me more."  
"Are you saying...?"  
"Interesting. Have you thought about...?"
- **Conversation doesn't have to be "heavy."** It is important to have conversations about subjects that matter deeply, such as who are the most influential people in your mentee's life. It is also important to listen to why your mentee likes a certain trend, band, or TV show. All conversations are meaningful when two people are truly engaged and interested in one another's questions and answers.
- **Listening is most important.** Conversations with your mentee are better when you practice the art of listening. Through careful listening you tell him or her you care about him or her.
- **Timing can be everything.** If you ask a question that is met with silence maybe this isn't the best time for a conversation. Or it could be that the specific question triggers a bigger issue for him, or he needs some time to process it.
- **Be prepared for the unexpected answer.** You may ask a question and get an answer you did not want or expect. If an answer bothers you, simply listen and ask more questions about why your mentee thinks and feels that way. Suspend your own judgment and let your mentee express their ideas and opinions.
- **Be prepared to give your own answer.** You are focusing on your mentee, but she may also want to turn the question in your direction. This is a great chance to model thoughtful, honest responses.
- \* **If you ever have a concern about your mentee, or you are unsure how to handle a response or situation, speak with your advisor as soon as possible.**