



**Roc ATD DEI Knowledge Hub**  
*Ground Rules + Useful Tools*  
*for Healthy DEI Conversations\**

*\*Source: Adapted from University Corporation for Atmospheric Research (UCAR)*

In discussions around diversity and equity, it's important to understand that everyone sees and experiences the world differently:

What's "right" in your experience may not be so in someone else's experience.

In a **group setting**, everyone works to consider **different perspectives**, for the purpose of **sensitivity, learning, and growth**.

To that end, there are some **ground rules** for participating in groups for everyone to follow.

## GROUND RULES FOR HEALTHY DEI CONVERSATIONS

1. Be willing to acknowledge that sexism and racism exist.
2. Acknowledge that we are all systematically taught misinformation about our own group and about members of other groups. This is true for everyone, regardless of our group(s).
3. Agree not to blame ourselves or others for the misinformation we have learned, but to accept responsibility for not repeating misinformation after we have learned otherwise.
4. Agree to respect others. This includes honoring others' experiences by being sensitive to them.
5. Agree to raise your hand when you want to speak unless otherwise specified.
6. Keep in mind that no one should be required or expected to speak for their whole race or gender.
7. Take responsibility for and accept the consequences of your words.
8. Be willing to keep an open mind: It is likely that some of your beliefs will be challenged.
9. Take risks. Comfort is overrated. Dare to engage yourself.
10. Agree to participate in the creation of a "safe"\* atmosphere for open discussion.
11. Equality pertains to all people with NO exceptions.
12. Agree to keep specifics of what is discussed in the group confidential. What is said in group discussions, stays there. What is learned there, leaves there.
13. Share the air. If you have a tendency to dominate discussions, take a step back, and let others participate. If you haven't said much, you're invited to participate more.
14. Hold leaders accountable. All of us are growing and evolving, and nobody gets things right all the time. We all agree to hold each other accountable, even those people who are leading a group.



\***Note:** In No. 10, we put the word "safe" in quotes. This is because people with some identities or personal experiences rarely feel safe in any room, and it's important to acknowledge that.

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# USEFUL TOOLS FOR FACILITATING DEI DISCUSSIONS

<p><b>Oops, ouch</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Part of having these conversations is messing up. (In diversity work, this is inevitable, no matter how experienced you are.)</li> <li>• If you say something that is hurtful or problematic and you realize it, you can say "oops" to acknowledge it and then try again.</li> <li>• Alternatively, if someone else said something harmful or problematic then you can say "ouch," which lets everyone know that there's something that needs to be discussed further.</li> <li>• The specific words "oops" and "ouch" aren't necessarily used all that often, but the idea gives people a way to bring these things up.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Everybody's right, but only partially</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The goal is not to agree, but to gain deeper understanding.</li> <li>• Remember that your experiences of how the world works and how society treats you are not the same as anyone else's.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Use "both/and," rather than "either/or," thinking</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Someone else may be making a good point that you may miss if you're concentrating on disagreeing with part of it.</li> <li>• Agree with the parts you agree with, and disagree with the parts you don't.</li> <li>• Remember that sometimes you might both be right.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Intent doesn't equal impact</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• When you say something harmful, it still hurts whether or not you meant it to.</li> <li>• As an analogy — if you tread on someone's foot and they tell you it hurt, you apologize and step off.</li> <li>• You don't spend time explaining that you didn't mean to step on them, and so therefore, they shouldn't be hurt.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Be aware of intersectionality</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• People have intersecting identities and the experiences of white, straight, able-bodied women are not necessarily the same as the experiences of women of color, lesbians/bisexual women, and women with disabilities.</li> <li>• Despite this, when people talk about "women," they almost always mean straight, white, able-bodied women.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Disagree with content, not tone</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Some topics elicit emotions from people who live these experiences every day.</li> <li>• While some people in the room are able to talk about these things in a detached way, others are not, and should not be expected to.</li> <li>• White people, in particular, have been taught that anger and making a point loudly are unacceptable ways to communicate.</li> <li>• They often say things like "no one will listen to you if you're shouting at them," or "I'm not going to talk to you while you're addressing me like that," or "I know you're angry, but..."</li> <li>• We need to understand that people who have been marginalized do not have the luxury of emotionally distancing themselves from conversations about their rights and experiences - it's not an academic discussion for them.</li> <li>• Disagreement with their points is fine, but be sure to disagree with the content of what people are saying, not the way in which they're saying it.</li> </ul>
<p><b>How to effectively call someone out/in</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Part of talking about equity and diversity topics is messing up.</li> <li>• When someone does, we need to have a way to talk to them about it effectively.</li> <li>• Often we talk about "calling out" someone who has said something offensive or had an "oops" moment.</li> <li>• It can be preferable to talk about "calling in," which assumes that everyone wants to do the right thing, just needs a bit of help getting there.</li> <li>• Always remember that calling someone in is a brave thing to do because it's risky.</li> <li>• People often don't react well to being called in (see below, under "how to apologize"), and so it puts the person doing it at risk of personal attack.</li> <li>• This <a href="#">blog post</a> is a great primer.</li> <li>• We can also mitigate some of the bad feelings by ensuring that we call in people's words, rather than their intent. See this <a href="#">video</a> for an example.</li> </ul>
<p><b>How to apologize properly</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Getting called out/in can be uncomfortable.</li> <li>• It can be embarrassing and feel like a personal attack.</li> <li>• The first reaction most people have is to defend themselves - don't do this.</li> <li>• Remember that being called in is a gift from a very brave person, who was willing to put their own safety and comfort on the line to help you become better educated.</li> <li>• The following two posts are superb explanations of how you can react in a good way to being called in: <a href="#">I was wrong and I am sorry</a> and <a href="#">How to apologize</a>.</li> </ul>