

Responding to Disrespect, Bullying and Harassment: A Communication Tool

Many situations involving disrespect, bullying, and harassment can be effectively addressed and resolved, and future issues prevented, by talking directly with the other person. In these situations, the person engaging in acts of disrespect may not fully recognize how they are behaving and will likely not appreciate their impact on you and others as well.

If you feel safe to talk with the individual directly about your experience, this guide can help you prepare for a respectful and mutually beneficial dialogue. Know that SFU's Bullying and Harassment Policy fully supports your right to have this dialogue.

Preparing for the Dialogue

- **Depersonalize the situation**

Focus your thoughts about the interaction on the specific behaviour you find disrespectful (e.g.,

- **Reflect on what is important to you in the relationship**

Identify what you see as your needs, goals, and hopes for your relationship with the other person and your experience (i.e., being safe to talk with the person; not being stressed; enjoying your work/project).

In your dialogue, you will want to share with them what you see as important in your relationship and how their behaviour has compromised what is important. For example, you might say, "I really want to be able to 'talk with you openly,' 'to trust you will be respectful,' or 'to be comfortable seeking your support'".

- **Consider what might be important to the other person**

In preparing for the dialogue, you want to avoid making judgements about the person or assumptions about their intent. These assumptions may not be true. It is also helpful to try to understand what their needs or goals might be (e.g., being successful in their work/project, having clarity on how you are doing your work).

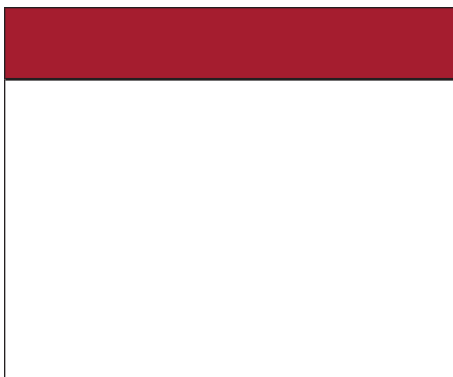
In your dialogue, it can be helpful to let them know that you recognize what you think is important to them as well as what is important to you (e.g., "I understand it is important to you that ...").

- **Define what respectful interaction from them looks like to you**

In your dialogue, you will want to be able to describe for them the change in conduct you are seeking. For example: "I don't want to be yelled at"; "I want to be acknowledged for my effort", "Please don't make jokes about my"

- **Prepare to Use "I" or "We" statements when describing what you experienced or need**

For example:



- **Use "We" or "Us" statements when sharing your goals for having a positive and respectful relationship**

For example:

- *"I want us to have a good working relationship...."*
- *"I hope we can resolve this incident together."*

- **Prepare yourself to stay calm and focused in the dialogue**

Keeping calm will help you stay focused and in control in the dialogue. Preparation will help you manage your emotions as well as the emotions of the other person. Keep in mind that people hear and interpret messages from what you say as well as how you say it (i.e., tone of voice and body language).

The Dialogue

- **Set a mutual time and place for the dialogue to occur**

- **Begin by stating your goal for the dialogue**

For example:

- *“Thank you for meeting with me. I needed to talk with you about our interaction (yesterday) so that we can work together in a positive way.”*
- *“I needed to let you know that I’ve been upset since our interaction (yesterday) and I wanted to talk*