Fostering a Positive Workplace Environment and Navigating Conflict

Supervising in the Time of Covid-19 Session
11.10.20
A Strategy
When the temperature rises: Open The Front Door

- **O = Observe**
  - A concrete, factual observation

- **T = Think**
  - Thoughts based on observations, but not intended to put the other person on the defensive

- **F = Feel**
  - Emotions you or others may have as a result of what you observed/conflict

- **D = Desire**
  - Desired outcome

*(with gratitude to Dr. Tasha Souza)*
How it Works: A Scenario

- Own it:
  - I observed
  - I think
  - I feel
  - I desire

- Pause, process, and proceed:
  - Point out what you noticed (rolling eyes, arms folding, etc). O
  - Indicate what this makes you think (that you said something contentious that might need to be discussed further). T
  - Indicate a potentially emotional response you or others may have (discomfort, misunderstanding, fear). F
  - Indicate a desired outcome (someone giving voice to their gestures, a civil conversation on the topic). D
• Remember:
  • **Multiple different populations and environments**: the classroom, the office, the chat window, students, and colleagues (lateral and hierarchical).
  • **Conversation is a two-way street** ...and others may have observations, thoughts, feelings, and desired outcomes of you, and you have to be open to that and mindful of power differentials, operative assumptions, and implicit biases.
  • **This returns us to our premise** of establishing and maintaining a positive workplace environment.
    • Be available
    • Be accessible
    • Be present
    • Be curious
    • Be empathetic
    • Be transparent
    • Set the tone...
      • Listen, learn, and lead
      • Share
      • Follow-up
  
• And please:
  • Stop expecting everyone to be online, available, and accessible All. The. Time.
  • Don’t assume that not replying to an email is a sign of disrespect or defiance, of being overwhelmed or disinterested—there may be reasons for a delay and sometimes people choose different means of communicating.
  • Recall that we are all working in an “and” mode of operation.
  • Don’t let your team think you’re talking about them before talking to them.
This is a tough time, not just politically, but socially, conversationally, institutionally, and individually.

The tyranny of absolutes is not helpful, so
- Listen
- Think
- Feel
- Process
- Respond

Don’t normalize what’s not normal
Don’t agree to be agreeable

"Fight for the things that you care about, but do it in a way that will lead others to join you."

~and remember~
"Real change, enduring change, happens one step at a time."
(Culture change doesn’t happen overnight)
Resources

- [https://www.webpages.uidaho.edu/cetl/handling-hot-topics.asp](https://www.webpages.uidaho.edu/cetl/handling-hot-topics.asp)
- [Discussing Traumatic Events](https://www.webpages.uidaho.edu/cetl/handling-hot-topics.asp) from UC Berkeley
  Guidelines on how to prepare for and structure a discussion, if you choose to do so
- [Brené Brown on Empathy (video)](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dQw4w9WgXcQ)
  3-minute video on distinction between empathy and sympathy with strategies about how to listen to and connect with someone who is suffering
- [Calling In: A Quick Guide on When and How](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dQw4w9WgXcQ) by Sian Ferguson
  Distinction between calling out and calling in as ways to get someone to stop an oppressive behavior (calling in attempts to do this in the most loving, self-respecting way possible)
- [The Faculty Focus Special Report on Diversity and Inclusion in the College Classroom](https://www.insidehighered.com/news/2017/03/14/communication-professor-establishes-rules-his-students-talking-about-trump-class)
  "Managing Hot Moments in the Classroom: Concrete Strategies for Cooling Down Tension" (p. 4)
  "Seven Bricks to Lay the Foundation for Productive Difficult Dialogues" (p. 6)
  "Overcoming Racial Tension: Using Student Voices to Create Safe Spaces in the Classroom" (p. 9)
  "Managing Microaggressions in the College Classroom" (p. 10)
- [Responding to Everyday Bigotry](https://www.splcenter.org/intel) from Southern Poverty Law Center
  Strategies for responding to bigotry at work, home, in public, and in yourself
  by Cynthia Ganote, Floyd Cheung, and Tasha Souza (pp. 3-7)
  Theory of how microresistance can be an effective response to microaggression
- [https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2017/02/27/why-facts-dont-change-our-minds?utm_social-type=owned&mbid=social_facebook&utm_brand=tny&utm_source=facebook&utm_medium=social&fbclid=IwAR3rBSeS1yQLGToii5Qqz-Xm1XNqZ25KMk1oO9SbKf_xv7jgXO8yF](https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2017/02/27/why-facts-dont-change-our-minds?utm_social-type=owned&mbid=social_facebook&utm_brand=tny&utm_source=facebook&utm_medium=social&fbclid=IwAR3rBSeS1yQLGToii5Qqz-Xm1XNqZ25KMk1oO9SbKf_xv7jgXO8yF)
- [Touch of Grey, The Grateful Dead.](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dQw4w9WgXcQ)