

# RESPONDING TO BIAS

## THE IMPORTANCE OF RESPONDING—TRY TO DO *SOMETHING*

If we do not respond to a biased comment or incident, we are essentially saying that it is all right to say the comment or act in a biased way. We can be sure that the comments and incidents will increase rather than decrease, if we do not respond.

If we hear a biased comment or observe a biased incident against our own group and do nothing about it, we may experience shame and weakness. We may blame ourselves. This is an example of internalized oppression.

When we respond positively to bias against ourselves or others, we feel strong and proud that we have stood up for ourselves or for another person.

## POSSIBLE RESPONSES

### 1. Listen

In responding to a biased comment or action, it is important to listen to what is being said. When we are listening, we are not encouraging the problem to escalate. (This is similar to other forms of conflict resolution.)

Actively listen to the person and try to understand their point of view.

### 2. Ask Questions

When we ask a question, we are not escalating the conflict. We are finding out more about what the person thinks, why they have the bias. "Why do you feel that way?" "What do you mean?" are examples of questions that could be asked after a biased comment is heard.

### 3. "I" Statements

"I feel upset when I hear racist comments because I feel unsafe."

This is an example of an "I" Statement which follows the model of "I feel . . . when . . . because . . ." "I" Statements are best when used in situations where there is some degree of trust and relationship. "I" Statements are somewhat more of a risk than some of the other responses.

### 4. Try Not to Judge

Biased comments or actions can make us very angry and we often have the impulse to judge a person for what they have said. Making judgments or assumptions tends to escalate the conflict.