**How to talk to medical students and colleagues about racial injustice**

Many people find it hard to talk about race, racial injustice, and inequality. It’s especially hard after events that demonstrate the continued presence of structural racism in our society, that make everyone feel unsafe, vulnerable, and angry. And yet it is precisely at times like this where it’s even more important than usual to “lean in” to our discomfort and reach out to students and colleagues to talk about it. Students expect it, and will often ask very pointed questions about disparities/race, that you should be prepared for. We hope this guide serves as a primer to give you ideas about how to have such discussions.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **What to do** | **How to do it** |
| Support Tips | Support each other, yourselves, your patients—be kind!!  Prepare yourself for conversations   * plan out what you want to say * think before you speak   Consider a trigger warning for students (“I want to talk about something difficult...”)  Share your own thoughts/feelings about what’s going on  Face your discomfort   * better to say something than to be silent * apologize if you say something that gives offense   Acknowledge the pain/grief of those who have suffered racial injustice  Encourage people to express themselves—advocacy, reflection, etc.  Thank students for their questions/comments--even if they’re painful to hear  Listen attentively, listen more than you talk  Don’t make assumptions  Ensure a safe environment for conversation (private, protected)  Never devalue another person’s views, values, opinions—be non-judgmental  Don’t force it:   * don’t make a person of color speak for their community * don’t force anyone to speak if they don’t want to   Admit that we all as individuals/organizations have much to do to improve  Provide examples of this work if asked  Learn about this—and share that learning…and try to be better   * ask questions and talk about race/racism * recognize your own implicit bias and seek to mitigate against it * live up to our values, especially diversity and inclusion * Recognize and respond to bias/discrimination, the hidden curriculum   Focus on wellness:   * sleeping/eating still important * breaks/timeoff when needed * unplug from media as needed |
| Check-In Tips | Small Groups:   * round robin—“tell me about a high point and a low point from the past week” * reinforce small group ground rules from the beginning * Monitor for reactions/emotions * Maintain safety of the group   Lecture:   * moment of silence * acknowledge issue/event * leave time for open discussion   Rounds:   * check-in with everyone on the team * group or individual * verbal/e-mail |
| Language  Terms | Open-ended: “How are you feeling about everything that’s going on?”  Validate: “This is really hard.” “So many have suffered.”  Normalize: “Lots of people are struggling with this.”  Respect and Be Present: “Whatever you want to say, I’m here for you.”  Empathize: “I see that you are feeling angry about all this.”  Use “stress” as a general term to get other emotions  Name It: use terms like racism, discrimination—as well as emotion words  Use “I” statements—don’t generalize  Avoid sarcasm or humor—can be risky |
| Resources (to offer) | **Dr. Evelyn Reis, Assistant Dean for the Learning Environment​**  [reise@pitt.edu](mailto:reise@pitt.edu) or [reisec@upmc.edu](mailto:reisec@upmc.edu) ​    **Professionalism Accolade or Incident Reporting (PAIR) website**: <http://www.omed.pitt.edu/PAIR>  School Mental Health Resources (school counselors/psychiatrist)  Advisory Deans and FAST Advisors  Dr. Joan Harvey, Associate Dean of Student Affairs  Dr. Chenits Pettigrew, Assistant Dean, Director of Diversity Programs |
| Resources (for you) | Listen to the Gardner's Tale (Allegories on Race and Racism (Dr. Camara Phyllis Jones) <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GNhcY6fTyBM>  TED Talk: Dorothy Roberts <https://www.ted.com/talks/dorothy_roberts_the_problem_with_race_based_medicine?language=en>  So You Want to Talk About Race by Ijeoma Oluo  How to Be an Antiracist by Ibram X Kendi  Between the World and Me by Ta-Nehesi Coates  Medical Apartheid by Harriet Washington  Other Resources: [https://docs.google.com/document/d/1BRlF2\_zhNe86SGgHa6-VlBO-QgirITwCTugSfKie5Fs/mobilebasic](https://nam05.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fdocs.google.com%2Fdocument%2Fd%2F1BRlF2_zhNe86SGgHa6-VlBO-QgirITwCTugSfKie5Fs%2Fmobilebasic&data=02%7C01%7Cmatthew.goldenberg%40yale.edu%7C6587135d6f01471efebc08d8064f3af6%7Cdd8cbebb21394df8b4114e3e87abeb5c%7C0%7C0%7C637266284653502100&sdata=IEVKqDykHwomqChWJBVV1J%2Fs2AOeUhFkRqS4KfJst30%3D&reserved=0) |