

# 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., comments; body language; facial expression; decisions) rather than beliefs that you have about the person (e.g., they are a bully, they are abusive).

In your dialogue, you will want to be able to describe the behaviour you noticed as if they were seeing themselves in a mirror, as well as through your eyes.

- **Understand the impact of their behaviour on you**

Consider how their behaviour may be affecting you, your relationship, and work/school. For example:

<b>Personal impacts</b>	Can include: feeling fearful, insulted, stressed, embarrassed, and/or angry
<b>Relationship impacts</b>	Can include: feeling intimidated, loss of trust, feeling unsafe with that person, reluctant to talk/meet with them alone
<b>Work/academic impacts</b>	Can include: being distracted, less productive, and less able to do your best work

In your dialogue, you will want to be able to describe the impact on you, and, if relevant, perceived impacts on others resulting from the behaviour of the other person.

- **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:

<b>About Observations:</b>	<b>About Impact:</b>	<b>About Needs:</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <i>"I heard you say ..."</i></li><li>• <i>"I noticed that ..."</i></li><li>• <i>"In front of the group, I saw you single me out for criticism"</i></li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <i>"I felt demeaned when ..."</i></li><li>• <i>"I was embarrassed by ..."</i></li><li>• <i>"I was hurt when ..."</i></li><li>• <i>"I noticed others in the room seemed uncomfortable when ..."</i></li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <i>"I hope you will listen to what I need to say ..."</i></li><li>• <i>"I have a right to be treated with respect ..."</i></li><li>• <i>"I want to feel safe when we talk"</i></li></ul>

- **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 about it so we can work in a collaborative manner.”*

- **Describe the conduct that you experienced as disrespectful as well as the impact it has had on you (per strategies outlined above)**

- **Be clear with them that you found their conduct unwanted and that it has had a harmful effect on you, your relationship, your working and learning experience**

- **Invite them to respond. Be ready to respond to their communication with Active Listening**

Active Listening is key to continuing with a constructive and mutual dialogue and developing an agreement to resolve the concern. Active listening includes:

- Paraphrasing (brief summary of what another person just said)
  - Reflecting (brief reflection of what they seem to be feeling)
  - Acknowledging (statement of recognizing their feelings, impacts, needs)
  - Open questioning (inquiry that asks for more information, not “yes” or “no”).
  - Summarizing (reviewing what each of you have said)
- **Conclude the discussion by summarizing what has been discussed and how it relates to your goals for future interactions**

For more information and resources related to this topic, please see the toolkit.