# Common Problematic Behaviors of Participants in Discussions About Race and Racism, a Beginning List

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Review the list of behaviors below. As you read,

Check off all of the potentially problematic behaviors of people you have ***observed or done*** during discussions about race and racism.

\*After you’ve read through the list and marked it, follow the directions below the list for additional reflection.

1. White silence
2. Dominating the conversation
3. Being inauthentic
4. Being polite and nice, not real
5. Staying guarded and protected
6. Credentialing
7. Intellectualizing
8. Stuck in our heads
9. Shutting down
10. Not present to or sharing our emotions
11. Stuck in fear, guilt, and shame
12. Using white tears to derail the conversation, avoid feedback
13. Overlooking the comments and contributions of colleagues of color
14. Discounting the experiences of colleagues of color
15. Insisting we understand and can relate
16. Dismiss the comments of colleagues of color
17. Minimizing the emotions of colleagues of color
18. Downplaying the impact of racist dynamics
19. Using a PLE (Perfectly Logical Explanation) to excuse or rationalize away racist dynamics
20. Refusing to believe the lived experiences of colleagues of color
21. Questioning and challenging the validity of what colleagues of color share
22. Disregarding feedback
23. Denying and defending our racist impact
24. Interrupting and talking over
25. Debating and arguing
26. Insisting we are right
27. Trying to justify our behaviors: That wasn’t my intent!
28. Take it personally when someone is describing a pattern of racist dynamics
29. I don’t do that! I am a good white!
30. Feel indignant if asked to explain, say more
31. Stuck at the individual and/or interpersonal level
32. Missing the patterns and dynamics of systemic racism
33. Judging and distancing from other white people
34. Competing to be the most “woke” white person in the room
35. Blaming the victim
36. Giving unsolicited advice
37. Rush to solutions
38. All talk, no action
39. Taking on a different vocabulary or accent when speaking with colleagues of color
40. Re-centering our issues and needs over those of colleagues of color
41. Claiming a false equivalency
42. Insisting there is reverse racism
43. Trying to smooth over conflict
44. Avoiding the pain of the reality of racism by putting a happy face on everything
45. Focusing only on how far we have come
46. Being surprised as colleagues of color share powerful ideas and insights
47. Condescending, arrogant, and patronizing tones and attitudes
48. Distracting nonverbal behaviors as people share: eye rolling, deep sighs, head shaking, side conversations, looking at their phone, etc.
49. Rescuing other white participants who are given feedback
50. Ignoring the racial trauma from national events and the organizational climate
51. Asking colleagues of color to teach or represent their racialized group(s)
52. Not interrupting racist dynamics in the moment
53. Insisting we need to be color-blind
54. Insisting “I’m not racist” instead of acknowledging racist attitudes and behaviors
55. Only considering a comment after a white person has validated what a Person of Color just said

\*After you’ve marked the list, add any additional behaviors you have observed in yourself or others. Then follow the prompts below:

* What is the probable impact when these behaviors occur?
* Go back through the list and note what you can do differently when YOU are about to engage in a problematic behavior.
* Review the list again and identify how you can interrupt the dynamic when other participants react in some of these problematic behaviors.