









Climate Case Study #4 - Interrupting a Bad Actor

How to foster respect and inclusion in your unit when...

...a faculty colleague says something that is off topic, disparaging, a microaggression, or ‘playing devil’s advocate’?

The Climate Case Studies are organized around RISE’s *Eight Levers to Shift Climate for Respect and Inclusion* framework. RISE uses the eight levers above to think about the ways in which more inclusive, respectful, and civil climates might be intentionally cultivated in the higher education workplace context.

LEVER	APPROACH	WHAT IT MIGHT LOOK LIKE
<div></div> <div>ENVIRONMENT</div>	Consider space arrangements in which everyone is equivalently positioned (no outer and inner circles) and there is space for informal congregation before and after the meeting.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• If it isn’t possible to have enough chairs at the table to accommodate everyone, is there a different space that could be used?• Serve refreshments before meetings to encourage informal moments of connection
<div></div> <div>EXPECTATIONS</div>	Start each meeting reminding everyone present of the rules of interaction in faculty meetings	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• “Just a quick reminder that we decided as a community that interruptions are ok as long as someone raises their hand and the point is relevant.”• “We’ve agreed to keep respect for one another in mind as we discuss difficult topics.”
<div></div> <div>INTERACTIONS</div>	Develop effective strategies for noting the problematic behavior and moving the conversation back on topic (or setting up a new conversation based on the interaction)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• “I’m not sure I fully understand what you mean. Could you explain what you have in mind with ‘cancel culture’?”• “I think what you just said could be interpreted in different ways, some of which make me uncomfortable. Since I’m sure that wasn’t your intention, could you rephrase what you just said?”
<div></div> <div>LANGUAGE</div>	Explain how the language choices the colleague made have particular effects (such as erasing experience or assuming certain people as the ‘default’ subjects or main audience)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• “I typically use ‘minoritized’ rather than ‘minority’ to indicate the process involved in creating and maintaining hierarchies between groups of people.”• “That comment seems aimed at the men in the room. Did you mean it that way?”
<div></div> <div>MODELING</div>	Model how to respond to problematic assertions	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• “I know it’s uncomfortable to not realize what you say is problematic, but what I try to do when that happens to me is ask for clarification after apologizing sincerely.”• “I know that you’re not the only person who thinks that, but I do know that the idea you just expressed makes many folks uncomfortable, so let me intervene here and try rephrasing based on what I understand you to be saying.”
<div></div> <div>OPPORTUNITIES</div>	Recognize this as an opportunity for more discussion around complicated matters	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Explore options for more learning and discussion (workshops, presentations, etc.)• “This seems like a more complicated topic than we have time for right now, so what do you think about shifting this to another meeting/to the annual retreat?”
<div></div> <div>ROUTINES & STRUCTURES</div>	Consider dialogue structures that allow people to let you know if they found something in a meeting problematic	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Hold open office hours dedicated to departmental colleagues• Remind people of your open office hours, especially if something difficult is happening
<div></div> <div>TIME</div>	Try not to pack meeting agendas so there is time to address issues like these when they arise	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• On your agenda, add time frames for each discussion point• “Let’s all work together to make sure everyone who wants to contribute has the opportunity to do so.”

Additional Resources:

- [Getting Past No: Negotiating in Difficult Situations](#) (Ury, 1993)
- [Microresistance as a Way to Respond to Microaggressions on Zoom and in Real Life](#) (Cheung, Faculty Focus, 2021)
- [Proactive Microresistance in a Microaggressive World](#) (Cheung, Faculty Focus, 2021)

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