

A Guide to

# Effective Bias Reporting, Response & Training Systems

Intentional Strategies for  
Furthering Campus Diversity, Equity,  
Inclusion and Belonging Efforts

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## Topics Covered

- **Defining Bias Incidents:** Clearly defining what these incidents entail will depend on your institution's values, systems and culture.
- **The Difference Between Bias Incidents and Hate Crimes:** This distinction helps form your responses, student conduct decisions and training programs.
- **Designing Your Reporting System:** Discuss how to use your resources wisely so you're staying on top of bias reports and never promising things you can't currently deliver.
- **Handling Anonymous Reports:** Making the critical decision to accept anonymous bias reports involves effective strategizing.
- **Communicating What Happens Next:** Once a bias report is submitted, then what? Determine what reporters can expect when it comes to follow-up, timeframes and possible outcomes.
- **Providing Support:** Those targeted by bias incidents need to know they're being supported. What's available on your campus when it comes to confidentiality, supportive measures, advocacy and more?
- **Developing Clear, Helpful Online Tools:** Those in need often turn online to better understand what their options are regarding reporting incidents of bias and garnering support. What messages do you send?
- **Issues of Protected Speech:** Expressions may be offensive or inflammatory, yet they may not violate bias policies. There's debate about intent vs. impact. So, what's an administrator to do?
- **Sanctioning Bias-Motivated Conduct Violations:** From restorative justice to disciplinary action, it's critical to examine your conduct policies and ready them for handling bias-motivated incidents effectively.
- **Increasing Trust and Transparency:** Helping students trust the system may involve posting bias incidents and their resolutions, yet you need to make sure not to violate FERPA in the process!
- **Training Your Community:** This is a key element of bias response programs. Determine what to focus on and how to be aware of legal and political challenges to certain training content.
- **Being Aware of Legal Challenges:** Using campus examples, we explore the creation of structures that hold up to legal challenges.
- **Eliminating Bias Incidents from Happening:** We offer a wealth of educational and awareness-raising resources you can use in your campus context.

## Introduction

Campus bias and hate incidents can do indelible harm. They create unsafe, unwelcoming environments for those who are targeted – and others. Bias can disrupt the work and lives of all members of the community, whether faculty, staff or student. They cause stress, anxiety and fear, often reducing targeted community members’ abilities to be as successful. As a result, emotional health concerns, physical symptoms, retention and recruitment issues arise.

To prevent this hurt and disruption, higher education institutions have created Bias Response Teams or groups dedicated to Campus Climate Concerns. These teams help colleges and universities meet their diversity, equity and inclusion goals. They support students who have been harmed by bias and hate while engaging others on campus in learning opportunities that can increase belonging and understanding by reducing bias. They allow community members to give feedback on campus climate problems and demonstrate the institution’s efforts to create a welcoming environment for all community members. However, if bias response systems are not shaped effectively, they can reduce trust, further fracture the campus climate and possibly be subject to legal challenges.

On the following pages, you will learn how to chart a course through the myriad obstacles that can trip up administrators’ best efforts to respond to bias and hate on campus. In each section listed below (save “Legal Considerations”), key concepts and best practices are provided. There are also customizable training exercises and documents that can help prepare your bias responders for the difficult work ahead. (The “Legal Considerations” section is slightly different and does not include training resources; there, we review significant legal settlements and court decisions so that you have a better sense of the current legal landscape.)

### Sections include:

1. Defining Bias Incidents and Hate Crimes
2. Designing Your Reporting System
3. Developing Clear, Helpful Online Tools
4. Providing Support
5. Sanctioning Bias-Motivated Conduct Violations
6. Increasing Trust and Transparency
7. Training Your Community
8. Issues of Protected Speech
9. Legal Considerations
10. Bias Incident Prevention

Through enhanced awareness, attention and action, bias response systems can help your campus become more inclusive.

**“We know [bias] incidents are what reduce inclusion, reduce belonging, cause students, especially from under-represented communities, to feel more anxious, more stressed. And that impacts their ability to be a whole student, to be as successful as they can be in the classroom.”**

– Allen Groves, JD, Dean of Students, University of Virginia

Source: PaperClip Communications, 2021



# Providing Support



## PROVIDING SUPPORT

### Overview

Perhaps one of the most important elements of bias incident response is to provide support for the people involved. Allen Groves, JD, Dean of Students at the University of Virginia, explained in a webinar, “The student who’s made the report and feels either threatened or attacked or dehumanized [by] an act of bias, but also the student who’d been accused or reported, these are both our students. They both require our support as we go through this process” (PaperClip Communications, 2021).

Whether having a conversation with a reporter or a respondent, approaching the discussion with empathy can help diffuse tension and help you better understand what students are feeling and how you can support them. Understood.org outlines the four components of empathy:

1. **Perspective taking:** “How does this feel for the student?”
2. **Avoiding pre-judgment:** “What more do I need to learn and understand about the situation?”
3. **Trying to understand feelings:** “What more do I need to learn and understand about how other people are reacting to or perceiving the situation?”
4. **Communicating your desire to understand with reflective phrases like**
  - “It sounds like you...”
  - “What more do I need to learn and understand?”

#### Additional Resource

Though developed for elementary and secondary school settings, the Southern Poverty Law Center’s guide on *Responding to Hate and Bias at School* has many portions that are relevant to post-secondary institutions, including the “Incident Response Plan” and “Incident Resolution Evaluation” forms. Access the document at <https://bit.ly/3iCg1uj>, then adapt as necessary.

### Supporting Reporters

To begin to support students who have been directly impacted in a bias incident, it’s important to understand that discrimination-related stress has both mental and physical effects. People experience discrimination as a stressful event and/or trauma (Sawyer, et al, 2012). Researchers have found that experiencing this stress repeatedly over time leads to negative health outcomes.

A study published in the journal *Social Psychological and Personality Science* (2017) explained that repeated experiences of discrimination can lead to poor physical health, including cardiovascular problems like increased blood pressure and higher likelihoods of chronic illness and earlier death. One study found that even anticipation of discrimination, regardless of whether the discriminatory event actually occurred, caused cardiovascular stress in Latinx study participants (Sawyer, et al, 2012). In terms of mental health, repeated experiences of discrimination can result in high anxiety, feelings of hopelessness, and depression. Another study found that racism-related stress hormones and sleeping issues may be a factor in the “achievement gap between white and minority students” (Clay, 2017).

**PROVIDING SUPPORT**

**Overview** *(continued)*

**Racial Bias**

A 2021 Pew Research Study asked those surveyed whether they had experienced bias-related incidents:

Feared someone might physically attack them

- 32% Asian
- 21% Black
- 16% Hispanic
- 8% White

People acted as though they were uncomfortable around them

- 27% Asian
- 41% Black
- 27% Hispanic
- 17% White

Were subject to racial slurs or jokes

- 27% Asian
- 24% Black
- 19% Hispanic
- 9% White

Were told to “go back to their own country”

- 16% Asian
- 21% Black
- 15% Hispanic
- 2% White

Source: <https://pewrsr.ch/3hsqetW>

Natasha Thapar-Olmos, PhD and program director of Pepperdine University’s (CA) online psychology masters program, emphasized that when someone shares an experience of discrimination or bias with you, it is important to listen and validate that person (pepperdine.edu). To effectively listen:

- Stop any other activities and turn to face the reporter
- Don’t interrupt
- Don’t jump to conclusions
- Paraphrase what they’ve said to make sure you correctly understood their meaning
- Ask open-ended questions
- Be prepared to be uncomfortable
- Do not take anger personally

The second aspect, validation, can be a bit trickier because you don’t want to promise some course of action that you cannot deliver upon. For example, the reporter of a bias incident might think that they have experienced a hate crime because they are not familiar with the formal definitions of a bias incident or hate crime. You can let the reporter know that their experience of and feelings about the incident are valid and that you are taking it very seriously, whether or not it meets the technical definition of a hate crime.

**GLBTQIA+ Bias**

A 2020 survey of over 1,500 GLBTQIA+ individuals found:

- 36% of respondents experienced discrimination in the last year, with 62% of transgender and 69% of nonbinary respondents in that group reporting discrimination
- Generation Z respondents were most likely to experience discrimination at school
  - 56% reported that discrimination had a negative impact on their school environment
- 52% of respondents stated that discrimination negatively impacted their psychological well-being

Source: Gruberg, Mahowald & Halpin, 2020

## PROVIDING SUPPORT

### Overview *(continued)*

Those who experience discrimination or bias might feel uncertain because there are so many factors that go into the experience, perhaps even questioning if their reaction is valid (pepperdine.edu). For instance, the reporter might feel that if they were stronger, they could brush off the impact of the bias incident. Perhaps it isn't such a big deal as it felt like in the moment, they might tell themselves. Others might feel extremely angry with campus administrators because they feel leadership has not done enough to protect them. As opposed to "blind agreement," validation means that you acknowledge that the reporter feels the way that they do. In other words:

*"I understand why you feel this way, based on who you are, what your history is, and what your experiences have been."* (onlinegrad.pepperdine.edu).

### Supporting Respondents

Students who are respondents might feel reprehensible, defensive, confused or angry. The Southern Poverty Law Center (2012) encouraged administrators to keep an open mind during these conversations, "as premature conclusions could fuel... tension rather than ease it." A student who feels like a prejudgment has been made will likely be less open to having a dialogue. It is important to listen to their take on the reported behavior and better understand what they were thinking.

Some respondents might refuse to talk about what happened. An institution's ability to make a conversation about a bias incident happen will depend on legal factors (see the section on "Legal Considerations"). In a 2021 PaperClip Communications webinar, Allen Groves, JD, Dean of Students at the University of Virginia, explained that the following factors will determine whether or not a conversation with a respondent can be mandated:

- Your location; specifically, in which federal circuit your institution is located
- Whether your institution is public or private
- Whether the speech used in the bias incident is protected
- Your institution's student code of conduct

Assuming that you will be able to schedule a meeting with a respondent, the conversations will exist on a continuum that depends on the incident's severity. Groves (PaperClip Communications, 2021) related a time when he spoke to a first year student who used hateful language. "We talked about... the impact of these words, the history of the word

**"Bias-based incidents are ripe occasions for education. Fear and ignorance often are at least partially to blame for this type of incident. This crisis is an opportunity to teach about culture and race, to help guide students to a deeper understanding that our diversity is a powerful force for good, binding us by our common humanity."**

- Southern Poverty Law Center, 2012

## PROVIDING SUPPORT

### Overview *(continued)*

in particular that was used, why it had caused the harm it had caused... The student wrote me several years later when he graduated. It seemed to be impactful to them. I think you try to show them that you want to understand what happened, and then you gently explain to them why that's wrong."

"On the other hand," Groves (PaperClip Communications, 2021) continued, "If somebody spray paints a swastika outside the Jewish Center... that's clearly a hate incident [investigation] that... you're going to have to take to judicial... That's not as soft an approach."

**"Someone may make bigoted comments or carry out other apparent acts of bias without understanding the full significance of his or her actions. Approach each incident with an open mind, and ask questions to determine whether a student was acting out of ignorance rather than malice. That understanding will help you frame your response to the incident."**

- Southern Poverty Law Center, 2012

### Intent Versus Impact

As we work with students on issues of bias, much of the work focuses on the student's intention versus the impact of their behavior. Did they mean to hurt people? Did they understand what they were doing? Your conversation and resolution to the reported incident will be shaped by answers to these questions.

In its document on bias incident prevention and response, ACPA emphasized, "Intention and impact must both be acknowledged in order... to grow stronger in its commitment to social justice and respond meaningfully to harm done." Though this document was created for use within a professional organization, it makes sense for bias response within higher education institutions as well. If a respondent acknowledges their role in a bias incident, it is possible to acknowledge that a student did something hurtful while also acknowledging that they were not fully aware of how the behavior would be received. Progress comes in helping the student better understand the harm and how they can take steps to repair it.

**"You've got to remember the age of many of these students, especially when we're talking about undergraduates in a traditional residential university. They are still developing. We know brain development isn't until around 25- [or] 26-years- old. While I don't excuse youthful indiscretions, there are young people who truly are capable of learning and capable of changing."**

- Allen Groves, JD, Dean of Students, University of Virginia

Source: PaperClip Communications, 2021



## PROVIDING SUPPORT

### Overview *(continued)*

Dr. K.E. Supriya, associate professor of communications at the University of Wisconsin, Milwaukee, offered the following guidelines for conversations about bias ([learningforjustice.org](http://learningforjustice.org)):

- Avoid loaded terms (“racist,” “homophobe,” “zealot”) that will put someone on the defensive
- Appeal to better instincts
  - “From what you’ve said, you’re a thoughtful person. Can you understand why it was hurtful for him to find that message on his dry erase board?”
- Set limits
  - “Even if you hold these beliefs, you cannot use language like that on campus”
- Acknowledge the importance of confronting bias, even if the conversation does not go well

### Self-Care

These conversations are potentially difficult, stressful and mentally taxing on reporters, respondents and the staff facilitating them. It might be particularly difficult for a staff member who is a member of the identity group toward which the bias was targeted. Dr. Thapar-Olmos of Pepperdine University (CA) emphasized the importance of recognizing when you’re feeling the heavy weight of bias and bigotry ([pepperdine.edu](http://pepperdine.edu)): “If we’re not healthy and we’re not monitoring our own emotional reserves, then we’re not doing anyone else any favors.” To build your stores of resilience back up, Thapar-Olmos recommended that you:

- **“Face reality head-on...** Name and acknowledge your experiences, whether it is to a family member, friend, or counselor.
- **Make meaning out of experiences.**
  - How can we learn from these experiences?
  - How can they inform us?
- **Control what you can.**
  - You may not be able to change other people, but what do you have control over?
  - How can you structure your interactions?
  - What are some healthy outlets you can use?
  - [How can you] exercise agency?”

## PROVIDING SUPPORT

### Active Listening HANDOUT

Often, when a staff member meets with the people directly involved in a bias incident, they are meeting for the first time. Expressing the feelings involved with the incident can be difficult for close friends to share, let alone strangers. How can staff members help those involved move forward from a bias incident? One method is to use active listening to let people know they're truly being heard.

In 1957, psychologists Carl Rodgers and Richard Farson developed the concept of active listening to help them "get inside" the viewpoint of their clients while communicating that they were trying to understand those viewpoints. For Rodgers and Farson, active listening requires the following components:

- **Listening for total meaning:** "Any message a person tries to get across usually has two components: the content of the message and the feeling or attitude underlying this content. Both are important; both give the message meaning. It is this total meaning of the message that we try to understand."
- **Responding to feeling:** Understanding that the literal content of a statement is less important than the feeling behind it.
- **Noting all cues:** The listener should pay attention for verbal cues, like the inflection of the speaker's voice, and non-verbal cues, including "facial expressions, body posture, hand movements, eye movements, and breathing."

Neil Katz and Kevin McNulty (1994) divide active listening into an "attending" phase and a "reflective phase." In the attending phase, the listener gives the speaker mental and physical attention. This is achieved through:

- Eye contact
- Calm and open gestures
- A private and non-judgmental environment
- Interested silence, where the listener gives the speaker time to express themselves at their own pace

#### What is conveyed by active listening?

"I'm interested in you as a person, and I think that what you feel is important. I respect your thoughts, and even if I don't agree with them, I know that they are valid for you. I feel sure that you have a contribution to make. I'm not trying to change you or evaluate you. I just want to understand you. I think you're worth listening to, and I want you to know that I'm the kind of a person you can talk to."

- Carl Rodgers and Richard Farson

Source: Rodgers and Farson, 1987

#### Benefits of Active Listening

- Letting the listener know that they're being heard and supported
- Getting feedback on whether you understand each other
- Helping the speaker work through feelings and thoughts at their own pace
- Helping the listener understand what the speaker wants them to do

Source: Katz and McNulty, 1994

## PROVIDING SUPPORT

### Active Listening HANDOUT (continued)

In the reflective phase, Katz and McNulty (1994) explained, listeners try to “express the essence of both the content and feeling the other has communicated to you.” It includes the following five components:

1. **Acknowledging Responses:** quick phrases that encourage the listener to continue (“go on,” “uh huh,” “right,” “you did”)
2. **Reflecting Content, Focusing on Facts, Ideas, Beliefs** (“you said...”, “you believe”)
3. **Reflecting Feeling** (“You’re feeling...”, “You’re sounding...”, “You’re looking...”)
4. **Reflecting Meaning, Where Content and Feeling are Tied Together** (“You feel (feeling word) because (content),” “You feel \_\_\_ about \_\_,” “You feel \_\_\_ when \_\_,” “You feel \_\_\_ that \_\_\_” )
5. **Summarizing**, or paraphrasing content and meaning that has been expressed in two or three sentences

Active listening also provides the listener with an opportunity to correct any misinterpretations, or to verify that those reflective statements were accurate.

Active listening can be derailed if judgment starts to enter into the conversation or the focus is taken off the speaker. Katz and McNulty (1994) explained that these derailments generally fall into three categories:

1. **Evaluating and Judging**, which could include agreeing or disagreeing, criticizing or blaming, diagnosing or praising
2. **Solving**, which includes ordering, threatening, moralizing, advising (“if I were you, I would...”) or premature problem-solving
3. **Withdrawing**, which includes logical arguing, reassuring (“it won’t always feel this bad”), diverting or understanding (telling that you understand without listening)

As Rogers and Farson (1987) explained, “While it is most difficult to convince someone that you respect [them] by telling [them] so, you are much more likely to get this message across by really behaving that way—by actually having and demonstrating respect for this person.”

**Sources:** Katz, N., and McNulty, K. (1994). “Reflective Listening.” Retrieved from: <https://bit.ly/2T4htgq>; Rogers, C.R. and Farson, R.E. (1987). *Communicating in Business Today* R.G. Newman, M.A. Danzinger, M. Cohen (eds). D.C. Heath & Company.

#### Conversation Starters

How can you start a difficult conversation about a bias incident? Try using a “door opener,” which is designed to invite the speaker in a non-coercive way. Open the door with four steps:

1. “Say (reflect) what you see in the other’s behavior.
2. Invite to talk, either stating or implying that you are able and willing to take time to listen.
3. Wait in silence to see if the other person wants to talk.
4. Listen reflectively, as appropriate.”

Examples of door openers for bias incidents might include:

- “You seem troubled.”
- “You’re really angry.”
- “You appear upset.”
- “You look nervous.”

**Source:** Katz and McNulty, 1994

## PROVIDING SUPPORT

### Active Listening Role-Plays ROLE-PLAY

Use these training exercises with the Active Listening Handout.

*TRIGGER WARNING: This document includes hateful language and behavior focused on sexual assault, religion, gender identity, ability and race.*

#### 1. Get In the Habit.

Active listening requires practice. Partner up and choose a book, movie or TV show (or something else about pop culture) that you both have experienced. Invite your partner to share their opinion. Before expressing your own opinion, you must restate the position of your partner, then ask your partner if that is an accurate assessment before expressing your own opinion. Then, you can express your opinion and your partner will rephrase what you have just said and check in to make sure you are happy with the interpretation. Keep the conversation going this way, using some of the paraphrasing sentence starters in the box above.

#### Paraphrasing Sentence Starters

- "I'm not sure I'm with you but..."
- "If I'm hearing you correctly..."
- "It appears to you..."
- "Listening to you it seems as if..."
- "So, as you see it..."
- "The thing you feel is most important is..."
- "To me it's almost like you're saying..."

#### Discussion Questions

1. How did using constant reflective questions feel?
2. Did this conversation differ from conversations you typically have? Why or why not?
3. How did you feel as the speaker?
4. How did you feel as the listener?

## Active Listening Role-Plays ROLE-PLAY (continued)

### 2. Keep It Open.

If you are judgmental in a conversation, it can put an immediate stopper on the conversation. Using the boxed open-ended questions, alternate with your partner in the roles of staff member and respondent:

- The respondent cat-called another student, describing various features that respondent liked and telling the student they'd better not meet the respondent in a dark alley or they'd be in trouble
- The respondent made transphobic posts on social media about another student on the same floor in their residence hall
- The respondent hosted a "cowboys and Indians" party where people who lost a drinking game were "sent to the reservation"
- The respondent followed behind a blind student who was using a walking stick, mimicking the blind student's movements with a stick from a tree

#### Open-Ended Questions

- "What alternatives have you thought about...?"
- "What do you mean by...?"
- "What could some of the consequences be...?"
- "What other possibilities are there...?"
- "What were the considerations that led up to this...?"
- "Why is this element the most important aspect?"
- "Where might this rule not necessarily hold true?"
- "How else could this situation be explained?"

Source: <https://bit.ly/36rvTdy>

#### Discussion Questions

1. Are there any areas of discussion where you will have to be particularly careful not to be judgmental (i.e. where are your outrage triggers)?
2. How can "yes" or "no" questions help or hinder a discussion?
3. How often do you use open-ended questions with students in your conversations with them? Why do you use them with this frequency?
4. How can helping a student walk through decisions in a non-judgmental environment help them develop a better understanding of a bias incident?

## Active Listening Role-Plays ROLE-PLAY (continued)

### 3. Summarizing Meaning.

After using reflective statements to ensure that you understand the context and feeling that has been expressed, active listening requires you to reflect back your perceptions of a reporter's meaning. Using the boxed reflective statements, alternate with your partner in the roles of staff member and reporter:

- The reporter was cat-called by another student who described various features that they liked and telling the reporter they'd better not meet the respondent in a dark alley or there would be trouble
- The reporter found transphobic posts about the reporter on the social media account of another student on the same floor in their residence hall
- The reporter went to a party, not knowing that it was a "cowboys and Indians" party where people who lost a drinking game were "sent to the reservation"
- The reporter was walking on campus with her walking stick and heard other students yelling at another person behind her to "stop being a jerk." Someone then explained to the reporter that she was being mocked.

#### Reflective Statements

- "I'm glad you're letting me know that..."
- "I understand your concern that..."
- "It's no wonder that you'd be hurt when..."
- "I can see why it's important to you that..."
- "I'm sorry you experienced this ..."
- "It's difficult when..."
- "It can be enraging when..."
- "It certainly is concerning that..."
- "It's frustrating when..."

Source: Weinberg, 1992

### Discussion Questions

1. Why are reflective statements important for these conversations?
2. When you were role playing the reporter, what feelings surfaced for you? How can this help you understand what students might feel in these situations?
3. It's tempting to directly ask a student what they are feeling in these situations. How might direct questions influence such a conversation?
4. How does acknowledgment of feelings help the conversation?

Sources: <https://bit.ly/36rvTdy>; <https://bit.ly/3wpr3be>; Weinberg, E. (1992). "The Art of Active Listening." Mercer County Community College Center for Training and Development: Rutgers, NJ; Rogers, C.R. and Farson, R.E. (1987). *Communicating in Business Today*, R.G. Newman, M.A. Danzinger, M. Cohen (eds). D.C. Heath & Company.

## **Validating Statements** WORKSHEET

In some cases, students will come into follow-up conversations about bias incidents with strong feelings. In other cases, they might not be sure what to think or feel. If staff members can receive a student's account of a situation without judgment, it could help that student work through their feelings.

PsychologyToday.com (2012) explained that validation is when the listener recognizes feelings and behaviors as something they understand. It does not require agreement or approval, but rather focuses on the speaker's experience of a situation. Validation is an important bias-incident follow-up because it lets the student know that their feelings have been heard and recognized.

Write a validating statement in response to each of the scenarios below.

1. A respondent says that he was joking around when he used a racial slur in the gym's locker room. He didn't realize it was a big deal because his family and friends back home use the word all the time and he feels horrible about it, but he's not a racist.
2. A reporter relates that she and her girlfriend were shoved apart and called an epithet when they were walking on campus holding hands. She isn't out to everyone and especially does not want her parents to find out; confidentiality is a concern.
3. The reporter is incensed that the campus hosted a controversial speaker that a student group sponsored. The reporter attended the speech and felt that the various hateful things the speaker said about the reporter's religion constitute a hate crime.
4. A respondent says she doesn't want to talk about the social media posts she made about her roommate "being lazy and getting special treatment in class" like note-takers (part of her roommate's disability accommodation plan) because no matter what she says, "You already think I'm guilty."
5. The reporter thinks that his professor accused him of plagiarism and gave him a failing grade on an essay "because I'm one of ten brown people on campus." The student contested the grade and the investigation found that he did not plagiarize his work. He is devastated that someone would think he would cheat.

**Sources:** <https://bit.ly/2UDssxO>; <https://bit.ly/3k3mErN>.

## **Self-Care Checklist** WORKSHEET

You're working hard to do your job in innovative, quality, compassionate ways to honor your commitment to students and to reduce the likelihood of bias on campus. Use the ideas below to make sure you're taking moments for self-care as you do this important work!

- Focus on What's Going Right.** When we reframe negative thoughts to instead focus on things that are going well, we can often counteract "negative thought creep." Before wrapping up at the end of each day this week, list five things that went right. By the end of the week, you'll have a list of good deeds. By listing what's going well, we're able to cultivate gratitude and flip the switch from "all negative all the time" to a perspective of balance.
- Think Ahead to Big Celebrations.** Anticipating big celebrations in the future can be good for us, while also giving us a head start on some planning. So, why not get a Google Doc going to collaboratively plan fun future festivities with others?
- Tap Into the Familiar.** There's something so soothing about the familiar. It's known, comforting and ready to make you feel better at the drop of a hat. When you've had a rough day, consider tapping into that familiarity to counterbalance this time of work-related stress. Pick up a well-loved book, watch a favorite TV show or movie or revisit your favorite passage from a religious text.
- Ground Yourself.** Mindful breathing and grounding exercises can help center and calm you. For instance, try the 5-4-3-2-1 exercise, where you ground yourself by identifying 5 things you can see around you, 4 things you can touch, 3 things you can hear, 2 things you can smell and 1 thing you can taste. Be sure to take long, slow, deep breaths to enhance the calm.
- Improve Office Ergonomics.** Is your office situation making your body feel out of whack? Some tips from the Mayo Clinic to improve ergonomics include...
  - Adjust your chair so your knees are about level with your hips
  - Have your computer monitor an arm's length away
  - Keep your wrists straight with hands at or below elbow level
  - Have the top of your computer screen at or slightly below eye level

Plus, try to get up and move around once every hour so you can avoid that feeling of being pinned to your desk chair. See if your office mates would like to take a walk on lunch break, or hold a "walking" meeting with one of your student leaders.

**Source:** PaperClip Communications. (2020). "Self Care and Support Calendar."



## PROVIDING SUPPORT

### Off Duty CASE STUDY

As a favor for a friend, Marcus, a Resident Assistant (RA), sat duty in another building on a Saturday night. On his way home at 2am, he saw a few white, male students relieving themselves on an academic building. He called campus police, explaining who he was and what had happened. The dispatcher immediately sent officers. Marcus, a Black male, stayed a ways away and sent a few text messages. The intoxicated students noticed Marcus. One of them shouted, “What are you looking at, [racial epithet]?”

One of his friends said, “Whoa, man. Shut up.”

Marcus asked, “What did you just say to me?”

The first student drunkenly retorted, “Keep your eyes to yourself, [racial epithet]!”

The friend said, “He doesn’t mean that. He’s wasted.”

Marcus angrily responded, “He said it twice and he doesn’t mean it?”

Marcus redialed campus police, but as the dispatcher picked up the officers arrived. Marcus hung up the phone and explained what happened to campus police. Marcus gave his account for the campus police report, then filed a bias incident report when he got home. In the follow-up conversation with Bias Support Services, Marcus explained how angry he was.

“I have worked so hard at this school. I get good grades, I’m an RA. It doesn’t matter. Those idiots were peeing on a building and still felt free to use that word and make excuses for it. RAs are supposed to ‘build community.’ How can I build a community with people like that in it? They’re going to go through the judicial process and get some slap on the wrist. It’ll never make up for how they made me feel. I want them expelled.”

#### Discussion Questions

1. What reflective questions and/or statements would you use to make sure you are understanding how Marcus is feeling?
2. How can you validate Marcus’s take on the situation without prescribing judicial consequences for the respondents?
3. The judicial process is separate from the work you’re doing with a bias incident report. How can you explain this to Marcus?
4. At times, it will be difficult not to get emotionally involved in how a reporter is feeling. How can you balance the pull of your emotions with the need to gather facts and information about a report in the hopes of determining a resolution to the report?

## PROVIDING SUPPORT

### Go Away! CASE STUDY

Susan didn't have time to get back home, get her face made up and get to work on time. Instead of going into the ladies restroom, she went into the accessible bathroom because of the privacy and space it afforded. She pulled out her curling iron, plugged it in and began to change her clothes.

About ten minutes into her thirty-minute routine, there was a knock at the door.

"OCCUPIED!" Susan yelled.

"I've been waiting for five minutes. I'm sorry but I really have to go and I'm missing class!" Replied a voice outside the door.

"Then go to another bathroom!" Susan said.

"I can't!" The person responded. "I have to use this bathroom! I'm in a wheelchair!"

"TOO BAD! GO AWAY!" Susan yelled.

Susan rolled her eyes. "Yeah, right. Besides, first-come first-served. Even if you are crippled you can wait like everyone else."

A few minutes later, a different, authoritative voice asked, "Excuse me. Are you OK? You have been in the bathroom for a long time."

"I'm fine! GO AWAY!" Susan yelled.

"If you are fine, I need you to leave the bathroom. Another student needs to use it. Is something on fire in there? I smell something burning."

"FINE! FINE! I'm coming out. Nothing's on fire." When Susan emerged from the bathroom with her hot curling iron and half-done hair, she found her Finance professor and a student in a wheelchair. The student in the wheelchair glared at Susan and said, "Finally." He wheeled into the bathroom and closed the door.

Susan's professor said, "I'm filing a bias report about this."

When Susan sat down for the bias incident report follow-up, she said, "I don't want to talk about this. But here's what I'll say. 1. Everyone uses that bathroom because the ladies room is gross. 2. How was I to know he was actually in a wheelchair? 3. I don't want to talk about this because you are just going to tell me I'm an awful person."

### Discussion Questions

1. Susan thinks you have arrived at a prejudgment. How can you invite her to talk about the incident?
2. How could reflective statements help you diffuse her reticence to talk?
3. How can you help Susan better understand your role in the bias incident process?
4. What emotions might Susan be feeling? How can this become a teachable moment for her?