

10 actions for respectful relationships

Below are 10 actions to which I commit in order to acknowledge my responsibility when it comes to having respectful relationships with all people regardless of social background. These were developed based on the writing of Allan G. Johnson in *Power, Privilege, and Difference*.

1

I can learn to pronounce each colleague's name correctly. No one should feel the need to shorten or change her or his name in order to make it easier for me to pronounce it.

2

I will continually challenge my own biases and how they influence my relationships with each community member, family, and colleague.

3

I will always try to review materials to ensure that they are free of bias whether in implicit or explicit forms. When I find bias in materials, I commit to encouraging others to recognize, analyze and change it.

4

I reject deficit ideology. I will always keep in mind that inequities do not result from deficiencies in disenfranchised communities, but instead are symptoms of systemic social conditions. This means that I must find solutions to these problems that focus, not on "fixing" disenfranchised communities, but on working with communities to fix those conditions and practices which disenfranchise them.

5

I will understand the relationship between *intent* and *impact*. I often have the luxury of referring only to what I have intended, regardless of the impact I've had. I will take responsibility for my impact because most individual-level oppression is unintentional. But unintentional oppression hurts just as much as intentional oppression.

6

I will reject the myth of social identity-blindness. As uncomfortable as it may be to admit, I know that I react differently when I'm in a room full of people who share dimensions of my identity than when I'm in a room full of people who are different from me. I must be open and honest about this and keep in mind social identity-blindness denies people validation of their whole person.

7

I will build coalitions with people who are different from me in terms of race, sexual orientation, gender, religion, home language, class, (dis)ability, and so on. These are valuable relationships for learning, feedback and collaborative problem-solving.

8

I will constantly work to improve my skills as a facilitator so when issues such as racism, ageism, and heterosexism arise I can take advantage of the resulting educational opportunities.

9

I will stress the importance of multiculturalism, not just during special months or celebrations, but all year.

10

I will fight for equity for all underrepresented or disenfranchised people. I understand that equity is not a game of choice. If I claim that I am committed to equity, I do not have the luxury of choosing who does or does not have access to it. I cannot fight effectively for racial equity while I fail to confront gender inequity. And I can never be a real advocate for gender equity if I duck the responsibility for ensuring equity for lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender individuals. When I find myself justifying my inattention to any disenfranchised group due to my own value system, I know it is time to reevaluate that value system.

These are all things I commit to in order to make me the best Director of Health Equity I can be. *Please join me.*

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