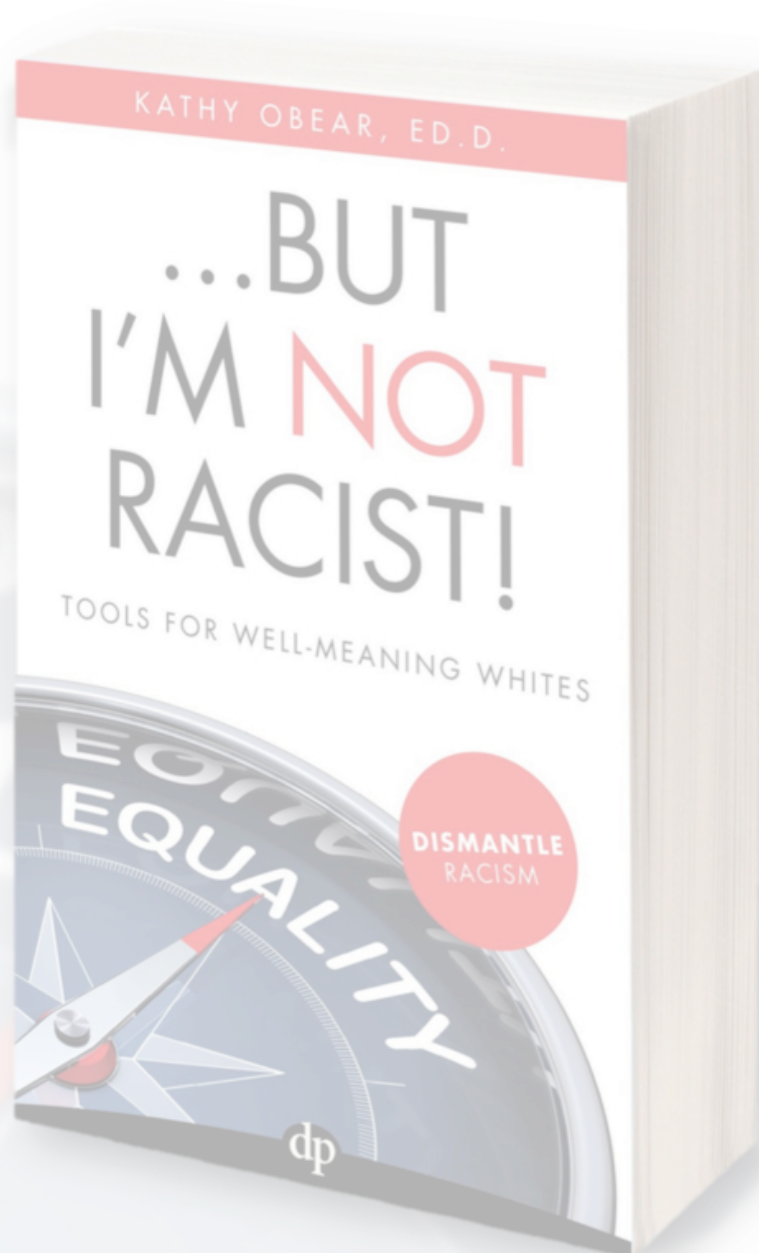


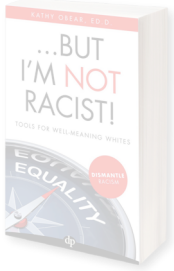


# Interrupting Racism:

## Our Role and Responsibility as White Allies

*with Dr. Kathy Obear*





# Interrupting Racism: Our Role and Responsibility as White Allies

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## Complimentary copies of my books and additional resources:

*Turn the Tide: Rise Above Toxic, Difficult Situations in the Workplace:*  
[www.drkathyobear.com/book-pdf](http://www.drkathyobear.com/book-pdf) | [www.drkathyobear.com/book-worksheets](http://www.drkathyobear.com/book-worksheets)

*...But I'm NOT Racist! Tools for Well-Meaning Whites*  
[www.drkathyobear.com/imnotracist](http://www.drkathyobear.com/imnotracist) | [www.drkathyobear.com/racebook](http://www.drkathyobear.com/racebook)

*In It For The Long Haul: Overcoming Burnout and Passion Fatigue as Social Justice  
Change Agents*  
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## Webinar Outcomes:

### Increase your capacity to:

- Identify racist dynamics in daily activities (intended & unintended)
- Recognize the impact of racist dynamics on individual and organizational goals
- Choose courage to speak up and interrupt racist dynamics
- Use proven tools to create greater racial justice in your organization



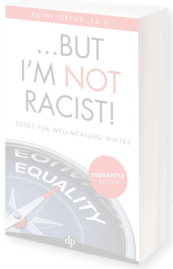
## Unproductive Meeting Behaviors

- In the 1st column, check-off any unproductive behaviors which you have observed in meetings.
- Then in the 3rd column, check-off any of these behaviors that you have ever done.
- Look back over this list, and imagine what needs the person/you were attempting to fulfill with each of these behaviors. Write these unmet needs in the 4<sup>th</sup> column. Examples of needs: recognition, inclusion, understanding, clarity, safety, connection, mutuality, collaboration, acknowledgement, efficiency, honesty, respect, competence, trust, fun, make a difference, etc.

Others do this	Unproductive meeting behaviors, when someone:	I've done this	Unmet needs
	1. Makes inappropriate comments or "jokes"		
	2. Belittles the input or comments of others		
	3. Minimizes or rationalizes away the frustrations and comments of group members		
	4. Interrupts or talks over others		
	5. Engages in side conversations		
	6. Dominates the conversation		
	7. Makes snide or sarcastic comments		
	8. Only interacts and makes eye contact with people like them; people they like		
	9. Gives unsolicited "advice;" tell someone how they should have felt or responded differently		
	10. Dismisses or ignores the input of others		
	11. Disregards feedback from group members		
	12. Laughs at or makes fun of other group members		
	13. Treats peers with disrespect		
	14. Gives someone the "silent treatment" or "cold shoulder"		
	15. Uses a negative, judgmental tone		
	16. Uses an overly aggressive or forceful style		
	17. Refuses to participate in the discussion or the activity		
	18. Is silent, shut down or withdrawn		
	19. Challenges the validity of the information being presented to serve a personal agenda		
	20. Questions the usefulness of an activity or a discussion to serve a personal agenda		



	21. Gives excuses or PLEs (Perfectly Logical Explanations) for disrespectful comments and behaviors		
	22. Raises their voice to try to silence others		
	23. Emphasizes “good intent” and does not also listen to the impact of actions		
	24. Makes negative stereotypic comments about others or self		
	25. Tells others they are “too sensitive”		
	26. Repeats or rewords what members with lower status have just said		
	27. “Hears” and acknowledges ideas only if they come from members with higher group status		
	28. Does not engage or “hear” comments from members with lower group status		
	29. Judges or dismisses input from members of lower status groups if they express anger or frustration		
	30. Only asks members of lower status groups to repeat what they have just said		
	31. When confronted, frames the situation as an “attack”		
	32. Go to lunch or socializes only with certain group members		
	33. Acknowledges and praises only certain group members		
	34. Rolls their eyes or makes other negative nonverbal behaviors when others are talking		
	35. Chastises others publically		
	34. Critiques and questions only the ideas and materials presented by lower status members		
	35. Bullies other group members		
	36. Has a patronizing or condescending manner		
	37. Derails the planned format and agenda to serve a personal agenda		
	38. Criticizes the personal character of group members		
	39. Takes credit for the work or ideas of others		



## Common Racist Behaviors and Attitudes of Many Whites

**As you review these common racist dynamics,**

- a) Check-off any dynamics which you have observed or heard a credible story about.
- b) Make a note next to the dynamics that you have personally experienced, felt, or done.
- c) Add any additional common patterns/dynamics you have witnessed or experienced.

### **Some/Many Whites Tend to (consciously and unconsciously):**

1. Believe they have "earned" what they have, rather than acknowledge the extensive white privilege and unearned advantages they receive; believing that if people of color just were smarter and worked harder...
2. Don't notice the daily indignities that people of color experience; deny these racist dynamics and rationalize them away with PLEs (perfectly logical explanations)
3. Work to maintain the status quo and protect the advantages and privileges they and other whites receive
4. Believe that white cultural norms, practices, and values are superior and better than those of other cultures
5. Internalize the negative racist stereotypes about people of color and believe that whites are smarter and superior to people of color and people who identify as biracial or multiracial
6. Want people of color to conform and assimilate to white cultural norms and practices
7. Accept and feel safer around people of color who have assimilated and are "closer to white"
8. Blame people of color for the racist barriers and challenges they experience; believe that they should just "pull themselves up by their bootstraps"
9. Believe that people of color are not as competent as whites and are only hired or promoted to fill diversity quotas
10. Interrupt and talk over people of color
11. Resent taking direction from a person of color
12. Dismiss and minimize frustrations of people of color and categorize the person raising issues as militant, angry, having an "attitude," working their agenda, not a team player...
13. Defensively focus on their "good intent" and lack of malice rather than on the negative racist impact of their behaviors
14. Focus on how much progress we have made as a society or organization, rather than on how much more needs to change to truly create equity and racial justice



15. Want people of color to "get over it" and move on quickly, stop talking about race and racism
16. Get defensive when people of color express their frustrations with current organizational and societal dynamics they experience as racist
17. "Walk on eggshells" and act more distant and formal with people of color than they do with whites
18. Segregate themselves from people of color and rarely develop authentic relationships across racialized groups
19. Exaggerate the level of intimacy they have with individual people of color
20. Fear they will be seen and "found out" as racist, having racial prejudice
21. Focus on themselves as an individual (I'm not racist; I'm a good white), and refuse to acknowledge the cultural and institutional racism people of color experience daily
22. Pressure and punish whites who actively work to dismantle racism, using criticism, gossip, and finding fault to make them conform and collude with the status quo
23. Expect people of color to be the "diversity expert" and take the lead in raising and addressing racism as their "second (unpaid) job" while whites sit on the sidelines
24. Minimize, under-value, ignore, overlook, and discount the talents, competencies, and contributions of people of color
25. Rephrase and reword the comments of people of color
26. Ask people of color to repeat what they have just said
27. Assume the white manager/supervisor/facilitator/employee, etc., is in charge and assume people of color are in lower status roles
28. Rationalize away racist treatment of people of color as individual incidents or the result of something the person of color did or failed to do
29. Dismiss the racist experiences of people of color with comments such as: That happens to me too...You're too sensitive...That happened because of \_\_\_\_\_, it has nothing to do with race!
30. Judge a person of color as over-reacting and being too emotional when they are responding to the cumulative impact of multiple recent racist incidents
31. Accuse people of color of "playing the race card" whenever they challenge racist policies and practices; instead of exploring the possibility of any negative differential impact based on race, or that racist attitudes and beliefs are operating
32. Shut down and focus on what to avoid saying or doing in the future, if they are confronted by a person of color, rather than engaging and learning from the interaction

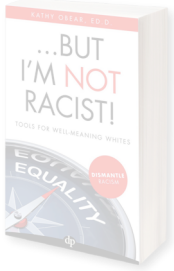


33. Look to people of color for direction, education, and coaching on how to act and what not to do
34. Compete with other whites to be "the good white:" the best ally, the most socially just one, the one people of color let into their circle, etc.
35. Aggressively confront other whites who make racist comments and pile on the critical feedback to distance from them and prove they are the better ally
36. Seek and demand approval, validation, and recognition from people of color
37. View it as an "attack" if confronted by a person of color, and focus on and critique HOW they were confronted, not their original racist comments or behaviors
38. Disengage if they feel any anxiety or discomfort in discussions about race and racism
39. Avoid confronting other whites on their racist attitudes and behaviors
40. Feel angry if people of color don't enthusiastically appreciate and recognize their efforts when they are trying to "help" people of color
41. Believe there is one "right" way, meaning "my way" or the "white way"

**More productive approaches:**

1. Track patterns of differential treatment of people of color and intervene to stop inappropriate actions and educate others
2. Continually learn more about the experiences of people of color and racism
3. Recognize when people of color might be reacting out of cumulative impact, and offer space to talk about issues and their experiences
4. Analyze policies and practices to assess any differential impact on people of color and intervene to create change
5. Constantly track daily organizational activities to ensure fairness, respect, and inclusion for all people with respect to group dynamics, communication, task assignments, professional development opportunities, decision-making, conflict management, mentoring, networking, etc.





## Common Unproductive Reactions During Difficult, Triggering Situations

### Fight Responses

- Aggressively argues and debates
- Raises their voice, yells
- Tries to silence others
- Tries to compete, win at any cost
- Interrupts
- Self-righteous, arrogant, or condescending behaviors
- Controlling, manipulative behaviors
- Intimidating, threatening behaviors
- Forces change
- Aggressively attacks and berates
- Dismisses or minimizes the comments of others
- Explodes and directs their feelings onto others
- Sarcastic or off-handed remarks
- Belittling comments
- Intentionally tries to embarrass others
- Criticizes or accuses with the intent to humiliate and shame
- Bullies others into submission
- Turns their words against them

### Flight responses

- Gets defensive
- Becomes overly guarded
- Withdraws
- Ignores or avoids issues
- Tries to smooth over conflict
- Placating to keep things under control
- Minimizes, downplays the issue or conflict
- Shuts down
- Disengages
- Uses humor and jokes to distract and smooth things over
- Quickly changes the subject
- Pretends to agree to avoid conflict
- Uses crying to distract and not engage

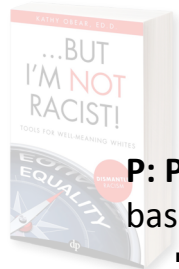
### Freeze responses

- Blanks out, forget what they wanted to say or do
- Zones out
- Feels frozen, like they can't move
- Doesn't respond or interrupt exclusionary comments and actions
- Overly anxious and scared

### Flounder Responses

- Giving contradictory comment/examples
- Stream of consciousness, blabbering
- Can't decide: maybe this or maybe that
- Out of your body, still talking
- Tangents; way off topic





## **PAIRS: EFFECTIVE DIALOGUE SKILLS**

**P: PAN** the environment and yourself; describe what you notice or engage others based on what you see (**Pay Attention Now**)

- I'm noticing I'm feeling...anyone else?
- I noticed how quiet everyone got; I'm wondering what is going on for folks?
- It seems some people were impacted by that statement, am I right?
- I'm noticing you're speaking with a lot of energy and emotion...
- I'm noticing that people get interrupted as they try to share...
- You seemed to have a reaction to what I just said...

**A: ASK** about the specifics behind the person's comment or behavior

- Could you say more about that...Tell me more...
- Can you give us an example of what you're saying...
- Help me understand what you meant by that?
- What were you hoping to communicate with that comment?
- Can you help me understand what your intent was when you said/did...
- Can you give me some background on this situation...
- How were you impacted when....What were you feeling when...

**I: INTERRUPT** the dynamics

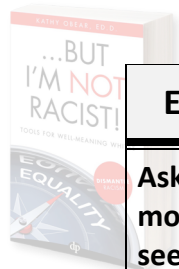
- Let's slow down the conversation and talk about what just happened...
- I'm going to interrupt and try a different approach to this conversation...
- We are not engaging according to our group norms.
- Let's take a breath...

**R: RELATE** to the person or their comment/behavior

- I relate to what you're saying, I...I have felt the same way...
- I remember a time when I...I did the exact same thing...
- How do others relate to that comment?
- What you're saying seems to relate to what so-and-so just said...

**S: SHARE** about yourself ~ self-disclose with a story or example; your feelings in the moment; the impact of a comment or behavior, etc.

- When I hear you say that I think/feel....
- Just last week I...I remember when I...
- I was socialized to believe...
- I'm beginning to feel \_\_\_\_...
- My heart aches as you tell that story...
- I notice I'm feeling a little triggered...



Engaging Skills	Examples/Descriptions
<b>Ask the person for more information ~ seek to understand</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Can you tell me more...</li> <li>• Can you give me an example...</li> <li>• Can you give me some background on this situation...</li> <li>• What do you mean when you say...</li> <li>• Help me understand what you disagree with...find frustrating...</li> <li>• Help me understand how you came to that conclusion?</li> <li>• What were you feeling when...?</li> <li>• What's your perspective?</li> <li>• What led you to that conclusion?</li> </ul>
<b>Paraphrase the person's comments</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• So you're saying that...</li> <li>• So you feel that...</li> <li>• So you think that...</li> <li>• Are you saying that...</li> <li>• So from your perspective...</li> </ul>
<b>Explore their INTENT</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Help me understand your intent when you...</li> <li>• What had you wanted to communicate with your comment?</li> <li>• What was your intended outcome?</li> <li>• What is underneath your comment/question?</li> </ul>
<b>TRACK/PAN the person's body language, tone, and comments</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• I notice you had a reaction to what I just said...</li> <li>• I don't believe she was finished with her comment...</li> <li>• I notice you just got very quiet...looked away...shook your head...</li> <li>• I'm noticing your tone of voice...</li> <li>• I'm noticing your body language...</li> </ul>
<b>Explore the IMPACT on them</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• It seems my behavior had an impact on you...</li> <li>• How did that impact you?</li> <li>• What were you feeling when...</li> </ul>
<b>Acknowledge and validate their points as much as possible</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• I hear that you feel...</li> <li>• I can see that from your perspective you think...</li> <li>• I'd probably feel ____, too...</li> </ul>
<b>Explore possible solutions</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What do you think we can do?</li> <li>• What do you see as the next steps?</li> <li>• One thought could be to...what do you think?</li> <li>• Might it be possible to...</li> </ul>
<b>State your desired outcome</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• This is what I suggest we do...</li> <li>• I want to...I need...</li> </ul>
<b>Summarize the dialogue</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Summarize the dialogue without stating opinions or judging the dialogue.</li> <li>• So we've discussed...we agreed to...</li> </ul>