

CommuniTea on Allyship July 16, 2021

Select and discuss the following scenarios (as time permits) within your group. Many of these scenarios are based on real events that have happened locally. Please use the Circle Process during discussions to allow everyone an opportunity to participate.

Scenario 1

A common way to marginalize people in a meeting is to talk over and/or interrupt them, not acknowledge their inputs (restate their ideas without crediting them).

- Have you noticed examples of this in meetings you attend? Why do you think it happens?
- How has it been dealt with (if at all) in the past?
- How do you think the person being marginalized feels?
- What are some ways to address this issue in future meetings?

Scenario 2

A staff member shares at a staff meeting that they are trans and would like everyone to use a new name and the pronouns "they/them/theirs," while everyone at the staff meeting is very positive and affirming in the moment, afterward there is a lot of confusion and hesitancy about how to proceed. People aren't sure how to let others know, what to do when they mess up pronouns/names, what other types of support this person may want/need.

- How might you proceed?
- What should you do if you hear someone using the wrong name or pronoun... In the presence of that person? Not in the presence of that person?
- What should you do if you use the wrong name or pronoun when speaking to the person?
- What feelings do you think the trans person is experiencing when they come out, and when people use the wrong name or pronoun.

Scenario 3

During a WHOI-wide social event you and a group of people meet a new young-looking woman who is African-American, named Susan. An older white colleague named John asks her "Are you a PEP student?" Susan says, no, she is a visiting professor from a university in California.

- What assumptions is John making and why?
- How do you think Susan feels when John makes that assumption?
- How might you react or respond?
- Should you talk to Susan or John later?
- What are good ways to open conversations with new members of the community?

Scenario 4

A woman, Jane, and her male boss, Tim, are attending a meeting that is predominantly white and male. The woman is attending as the technical expert, and provides a short presentation on a technical solution. After the presentation, someone in the room asks a question about the presentation to the male boss, not the female technical expert. The boss replies, "Well, actually, Jane is here to talk about that..." looking back at Jane. Jane's boss essentially gave her the mic back, and validated her position as the technical expert.

- How do you think Jane felt in this situation?
- Are there ways that Jane could have taken the mic back? How might she have been perceived for doing that?
- What are other ways that Tim could have acted that would not have been good examples of allyship?
- What are things that other people in the room could have done to be a good ally?

Scenario 5

A man, James had a psychotic break in December and since then has been on short term disability. He returns to work in April and after returning back is consistently given less challenging tasks. In a meeting with his supervisor he asks for more challenging tasks and his supervisor says "I just don't want it to be too stressful for you". James confides in you, his colleague about this dilemma.

- How might James be feeling in this situation?
- What advice might you give to James?
- How could you be an ally in this situation?
- As a supervisor how would you handle this situation?

Scenario 6

When doing introductions a white person asks an Asian American person what kind of name theirs is, and hearing it is an Asian name enthusiastically responds, "Welcome to America!", despite the Asian American having lived in the USA their entire life or for many years.

- How do you think the Asian American feels in this situation
- How can you intervene and be an ally in this situation?