

Creating safe spaces for open dialogue



Leaders' Guide to having race-related conversations

Leaders at Humana are accountable for creating an inclusive culture that allows our company and members to thrive. While race relations is important to address consistently, our teammates need support when issues reach a breaking point in impacted communities. Our goal is to support you with tools you need to lead your team through a crucial time. This guide provides an outline to create an open dialogue about race relations with your team.

Step 1: Acknowledge the issues in our communities and prepare for a dialogue

When acts of hatred, violence and bias are prevalent, each of us is impacted. No matter one's race, ethnicity, neighborhood or gender, events like these are felt by everyone, often in unique ways. As leaders, it's important to acknowledge the events that are taking place, and demonstrate your inclusive leadership skills.

Have a conversation about race relations with all of your teammates – not a select few based on your own assumptions. Do not to place any responsibility or extra expectation on your teammates of color. Commonly called “emotional tax,” people of color are often called upon to come up with the best answer or solution to race-related issues. That is not the purpose of this dialogue, but rather, to check in, share feelings and listen to one another.

As you prepare to have a conversation about race with your teammates, reflect on your identity and intention. Your goal is to show care and demonstrate Humana's inclusive culture.

Reflect and write down your own thoughts for the following statements:

- Talking about race is challenging because ...
- Talking about race is necessary because ...
- Talking about race is beneficial because ...

Before a tough conversation, it's important to be in a clear headspace and prepare your state of mind. Ask yourself: **How have recent events of hatred and violence affected my personal life? How have my family and loved ones been impacted? Where is my current stress level?**

Fear of saying the wrong thing can often hold us back from saying anything at all. A good place to start is completing Humana's [Invisible Influencers](#), a 35-minute eLearning experience to help identify and combat unconscious biases. Approach the conversation with humility and curiosity.

Driven by our Values

Humana's guiding behaviors are the foundation for navigating crucial conversations. As leaders, we can create space for speaking up, collaborating and empowering associates to be open and feel safe.

Think of the Humana Values as your guide to why these conversations are important. **Cultivate Uniqueness** calls us to:

- Encourage openness of thoughts, opinions and perspectives.
- Ensure people are heard and appreciated for who they are.
- Replace judgment with curiosity, thoughtful questions and listening.
- Respect people and encourage sharing of ideas.

With your help, we can create a culture where every associate feels heard, seen and cared for.

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Step 2: Meet with your teammates on this ask

You know your teammates best, so either in 1x1s for each person on your team or in a group team setting, create a time to get together and simply touch base. You can begin by saying:

Start the conversation:

A lot is going on in our world and our communities right now, and that can create stress and anxiety for each of us in unique ways. It's easy to feel overwhelmed. I wanted to simply touch base with you to check in.

How are you feeling right now? How can we help support each other during this time? How is this impacting your world?

I realize this is a powerful topic, so let's take a moment to empathize. This conversation is not meant to be a debate. No one is right or wrong, and this one conversation isn't going to create the solution to a complex issue. What we are here to do and what can do is be here to listen and assume positive intent of everyone.



If you find the conversation is headed in the wrong direction, step in. It's OK to pause, thank everyone for their openness, and then remind the group of the ground rules.

Understand the ground rules in tough conversations

As you start your conversation, you may want to lay out or mention some ground rules. Simple ground rules help alleviate conflict in advance and provide a roadmap for the conversation.

1. **Listen to understand.** Allow yourself to let go of your own train of thought and listen fully to others. Ask questions to clarify, not to challenge, and put yourself in the other's shoes.
2. **Assume positive intent.** Let go of your own judgments, viewpoints and biases, so you can focus on what other people are actually saying. Assuming positive intent means consciously choosing to believe that people act and speak to the best of their ability, and for the benefit of others.
3. **Engage in dialogue, not debate.** Dialogue is open-ended, goal-free and about shared learning, while debates may quickly turn into arguments and result in negative feelings.

Recognize the difference:

- Dialogue does not include people being right or wrong.
 - Dialogue is not about changing anyone's mind.
 - Dialogue does not result in a winner or conclusion.
4. **Customize the conversation.** Allow others in the group to add their own ground rules to the discussion.

Conversation boosters

Consider enhancing the conversation with these talking points:

- Have you ever witnessed someone being treated unfairly because of their racial or ethnic identity? If so, how did you respond? How did it make you feel?
- Are there actions that can be taken to help our team feel more connected to the work and connected as a team?
- What do you need to feel safe to speak up?
- As your leader, is there more I should be doing to inspire inclusion?
- Tell me how I can be a better ally.
- Talk about unconscious bias. Recommend everyone complete [Invisible Influencers](#) in the Learning Center to explore more.

Additional support

- [8 Rs to talking about race](#)
- [How to be an ally for communities in turmoil](#)
- [Lead outward, lead inward](#)
- [Respond with heart, not harm](#)
- [Helping Employees After A Stressful Event](#)
- If more support is needed, recommend the Employee Assistance Program (EAP) at [go/EAP](#) (username: humana; password: humana) or call 1-877-509-0096.