


The Importance of our Words



BUT IT WAS "JUST A JOKE!"





WHAT'S IN A JOKE?

When someone who is **not part of a minority group** makes a "joke" about someone's ethnicity, gender, or sexual orientation, a **power differential** occurs.

A power differential can look like many things:

- **white privilege**
- **heteronormativity**
- **toxic masculinity**

The power differential makes it **difficult** for someone in a minority group to respond to jokes that are racist, sexist, or queerphobic. They can feel isolated, scared to speak up, or afraid to seem "defensive", since the person making the "joke" is often someone with **greater social power** than them.

"BUT I DIDN'T MEAN IT LIKE THAT!"



One person's intention can be **interpreted very differently** by someone else. This is especially true in cases where there is a power differential between persons.

It's important to recognize that we may say things that are unknowingly inappropriate, harmful, or offensive to others **without actively meaning to cause harm.**

We need to **recognize our own privilege** and be able to respond appropriately when we cause unintentional harm.

**Take a moment.
Reflect.
Apologize.
Learn.**

THIS HAPPENS IN THE CLASSROOM, TOO.



This may seem like repetitive information.

But these types of comments
happen in the classroom, too.

Hearing inappropriate comments **made by classmates to classmates** creates an unsafe, disruptive, and unwelcoming environment for learners.

HEAR SOMETHING? SAY SOMETHING!



It's important to **speak up** if you witness an inappropriate joke being made at the expense of a person in a minority group.

Part of being an ally includes **using your voice** to support those who often struggle to speak up for themselves.

Our academic institutions should be **safe learning environments** where all students feel heard, respected, and valued.

We all have a part to play in creating safe spaces for each other inside and outside the classroom.

HOW DO I RESPOND?



Responding to racist, sexist, or queerphobic comments can be daunting. As a person in a minority group, responding can sometimes feel impossible. That's why it is so important that allies speak up and help create a **safe environment** for all learners!

Things we can say:

- "I'm not sure if you meant it like this, but your comment just now came across as [blank]."
- "What you just said makes me feel uncomfortable; please don't say that again."
- "I don't think that was an appropriate thing to say."