

RESPONDING TO JOKES AND SLURS

When confronting offensive humor or slurs, the A WORLD OF DIFFERENCE® Institute's philosophy incorporates a process that helps people to take control of a situation. This process has proved helpful for people of all age groups, from elementary school children to adults.

1. Begin the process by clarifying for yourself what you want to get out of the interaction. If venting your anger is your primary goal, you may be unlikely to have a successful interaction with the other person. Similarly, making an equally offensive remark or publicly embarrassing the person who told the joke is not the most productive response.
2. Try to assume good will. Many people who make offensive remarks do so out of ignorance. Because they do not intend harm, they often assume no harm is done.
3. Talk to the person privately. By speaking to the person who offended you one-on-one, you remove the necessity to "save face" publicly or to defend his or her actions in front of a group.
4. Start the conversation by "vesting your relationship." People listen better when they know they matter to the person who is speaking. For example, start the conversation by saying something like, "I wanted to talk with you, Mary, because your friendship is very important to me."
5. Use "I" statements, not "you" statements. The point of the conversation is to let the person who offended you know how you feel about what was said. The conversation will be less successful if it focuses on what you think the other person did "wrong." Choosing words accordingly helps eliminate people's need to defend their actions.
6. Remember your "rights." You do not have the right to dictate someone else's sense of humor. You do, however, have the right to request that this type of humor not be used in your presence.

Keeping doors to communication open is more productive than slamming doors.