

# Creating Intentional Inclusive Spaces

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To nurture welcoming spaces, we have compiled some strategies for participants as well as leaders (e.g., chairs, organizers, moderators, panelists) to use when involved in SETAC forums. These strategies represent current best practices as shared by other scientific societies and are not exhaustive.

## Participation

- Uphold SETAC's code of conduct and code of ethics.
- Embody SETAC values: Transparency, integrity, diversity and inclusion, equity, sustainability, and civil dialogue.
- Listen fully even if you disagree. Be present for the discussion, instead of thinking ahead to how you can counter-argue the points being raised.
- Make time and take time. Take time to speak—your contributions are valuable—and make time as the contributions of others are also noteworthy. Do not dominate conversations.
- Focus on the facts and avoid assigning intentions.
- Be kind and avoid judgment. Be tolerant of other perspectives.
- Ask, when in doubt. Give grace.
- Foster discussion: Offer feedback and technical comments that advance discussions and the discipline collaboratively.
- Focus on the science: Center comments on the data and facts of the science and not the individuals involved. Question the methodology, not the person.

## Language

- Try to limit technical jargon and subject-specific acronyms.
- Be respectful: Mind your tone and tenor so that it is always respectful.
- Refer to all people equally and equitably. SETAC's marketing and outreach communications style is to use the first name and last name in first instance and then, the last name is used thereafter, avoiding honorifics. When talking in person, we encourage members to refer to each other by their first name using the members preferred name (ex., Jen instead of Jennifer).
- Make a concerted effort to correctly pronounce people's names.
- Mind your pronouns:
  - Consider using pronouns when introducing yourself, or others, if they are comfortable with doing so.
  - Use they/them, or someone's first name, if you are unaware of what their pronouns are. If you use the wrong pronoun, correct yourself and move on.
- Avoid offensive language (ableist, derogatory, culturally insensitive)
  - Avoid explicitly gendered terms, such as *ladies and gentlemen* or *guys*. Consider neutral language instead: *everyone, folks, all* or the collective *you*.
  - Avoid ableist language, such as *tone-deaf, double-blind*. Use inclusive syntax such as *oblivious, double-anonymous*.
  - Avoid culturally insensitive language, such as *kow tow, pow wow* or *Chinese wall*. Use descriptive words like *capitulate* and *discuss*.

## Correction

If you are asked to stop a behavior or comment, you should immediately comply. Don't make excuses but allow space for people to talk to you about how or why it impacted them. Acknowledge that you heard them. If you realize that you were offensive, you may want to apologize.



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Extra strategies for leaders during question and answer or comment periods:

- Ask presenters to clearly define acronyms in the first reference. If you are online, provide the definition in the chat.
- Remind participants speak “leanly,” slowly, clearly and to avoid jargon. Further, remind participants to use a microphone.
- Treat everyone with the same level of formality and respect.
- Pay attention to who wants to speak. Research shows that when women or gender non-conforming people are called on first, there tends to be more gender balance among subsequent questioners. Specifically encourage junior scientists to ask questions and prepare senior and more experienced people for not being called on immediately. For example, “There are many junior scientists in this session. I would like to encourage you to ask questions during the Q&A and discussion.”
  - In the virtual space, use the hand raising feature.
  - Be intentional about the order in which you accept questions or allow up-voting.
  - Let participants know how to follow-up afterwards if their question was not sufficiently addressed.
- Collect up to three questions before referring the questions back to the panel or presenter.
- For online meetings, give credit for ideas, insights and contributions. For example, “We have a question here from Jane Doe in the chat. [Ask question.]”
- Be an ally: Ensure that participants are conducting themselves in an inclusive fashion and take action otherwise. See next section for tips on allyship and how to handle incivility.
- Work with your co-chairs. You are not alone on the platform, so rely on your co-chairs for support and work together as a team.

## Allyship

Allyship is a term used in social justice activism to describe efforts of people to support those who are on the receiving end of unacceptable behavior, including incivility, harassment or bullying, whether verbal or physical.

At SETAC, we define incivility as speech or behavior that does not adhere to SETAC standards. This can include but is not limited to using hostile, rude, offensive or accusatory language; interrupting others who are speaking; refusing to acknowledge other perspectives; using a disrespectful or condescending tone or gestures (e.g., eye rolling, hand gestures, etc.); making inappropriate biased comments on individual characteristics, including accent, appearance, educational or professional background or affiliation, etc.

When there is a power differential or demographic difference between the transgressor of uncivil behavior and the target, this incivility can often be received as microaggression, harassment or bullying. Regardless of how incivility is defined, it can feel persecutorial, and it creates an uncomfortable environment that undermines the feeling of belonging. Even if the transgressor’s intent is unintentional and the incident or speech is a result of carelessness, it can still cause harm. Moments of incivility can affect the recipient (target) as well as any witnesses.

If you are in a leadership position, do not allow incivility to go unchecked.

### **What to do when you encounter incivility?**

It is quite complex for potential allies to decide if and how to intervene. Often silence is not an option as silence can be seen as an action not an inaction. However, allies should be mindful of the relationship between the target and the transgressor as well as their relationship with both.



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There are several strategies on how to handle unwelcome behavior. The best strategy will depend on the situation and is influenced by many factors, including the relationship between the target, the transgressor(s) and the bystander.

As an ally you may choose to point out and gently correct behavior, offering grace and guarding against shaming the transgressor, either in the moment or privately later. The timing should depend on many factors, including the situation (if there is imminent danger, a timelier response may be preferred), the ally's position vis a vis the transgressor, the ally's relationship with both the transgressor and the target.

There may be a power differential that prohibits the target from a public response or even seeking a private remedy. Likewise, there may be a power differential that prohibits a witness (even in a leadership position under the circumstances) from correcting the transgressor. In every circumstance, the target's desired outcome should be the most important factor. An ally should strive to speak to the target privately as soon as there is an opportunity to do so and point out SETAC's [problem resolution process](#) and [whistleblower policy](#) so that the target has all the information and can determine how they'd like to see the situation resolved.

It is helpful to mentally prepare and even better to practice with a group of trusted colleagues.

Sample approaches with examples:

- Pivot or change the topic so that that it can be addressed privately later
- "Let's move on and we can take this up afterwards."
- "For the sake of time, let's continue this discussion later"
- Question or interrupt
- "Can you explain what you mean by this?"
- Arouse dissonance
- "Did I hear you correctly?" or "I am surprised to hear that..."
- Disagree
- "I don't think we should make such general statements."
- Express emotion
- "I am uncomfortable with this conversation."
- Advocate
- "That term is no longer acceptable."

## Resolving Incivility

While we strive to offer tips and strategies to create inclusive places, we are mindful that incidences do occur. We provide a mechanism for anyone to [report an incident](#) and will work with them to see it resolved under our [problem resolution process](#).

