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# What is a “respectful workplace”?

A respectful workplace is one where all employees are treated fairly, difference is acknowledged and valued, communication is open and civil, conflict is addressed early and there is a culture of empowerment and cooperation.

The sample snapshots below all fall somewhere along the continuum representing respectful to disrespectful workplaces. Putting yourself in the picture helps to identify behaviours that feel respectful (and those that don't) when they come from supervisors or colleagues.

- You and your supervisor argue about the relative priorities of the projects you are working on. In a staff meeting a week later, your supervisor refuses to make eye contact and ignores your contributions.
- A senior colleague in your department often yells during departmental meetings. This colleague also rolls their eyes and sighs loudly when others are speaking (especially more junior faculty members). You raise this behaviour with your mentor who says “oh that’s just \_\_\_\_\_ . They’ve been doing that for years!”
- You are the only Jewish employee in your area. For as long as you remember there has been a staff Christmas Party. This year, you see a notice posted in November announcing a Holiday Party for all staff to be held early in December.
- As a new employee, you attend Orientation. Someone from Human Resources talks about your right to be accommodated for religious holidays, a disability or family responsibilities.
- Your director takes times at every meeting to recognize someone for

a special contribution to the work of the team. They take a few minutes to thank this individual and speak specifically about that person’s skills and achievements.

- At your first departmental meeting your chairperson introduces you to your colleagues and acknowledges you as the first Indigenous scholar to be hired in the department. Your chairperson talks about the learning opportunity this presents for the department.

## How can you contribute to a respectful workplace culture?

- Be open to and accept different experiences and points of view.
- Not blame, threaten or name call even when you are hurt.
- Take training on conflict resolution.
- Practice inclusivity—try to make sure that individuals or groups aren’t excluded in any way.
- Support co-workers who are being harassed, discriminated against or treated disrespectfully.
- Try and make connections with co-workers who are different from you (age, gender, sexuality, race, culture, faith, disability, etc.)
- Educate yourself about diversity without expecting people different from you to assume that task.
- Seek to understand the ways privilege and discrimination have played out in your own life and in your family history. Often it is more work to understand privilege than it is to understand oppression.
- Consider attending a Creating Spaces workshop.



- Contact the Employee and Organizational Development section of Human Resources to arrange for a workshop for you and your colleagues or take some workshops or courses listed on the Learning and Development Calendar.
- Participate in the review of Policy 1150 Discrimination and Harassment Policy and Procedures.

This list is just a beginning! EQHR welcomes your suggestions for other ways to contribute to a respectful workplace culture. Please contact us with your ideas [aloggin@uvic.ca](mailto:aloggin@uvic.ca)

Credits to Cindy Player, former Director, Equity and Human Rights