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The Mosaic Project teaches people — from kindergartners to corporate executives — the skills they need to build the inclusive, equitable, and just communities they envision.



Since 2000, Mosaic has provided over 70,000 individuals with immersive, experiential education programs in equity, empathy, and effective communication across differences.

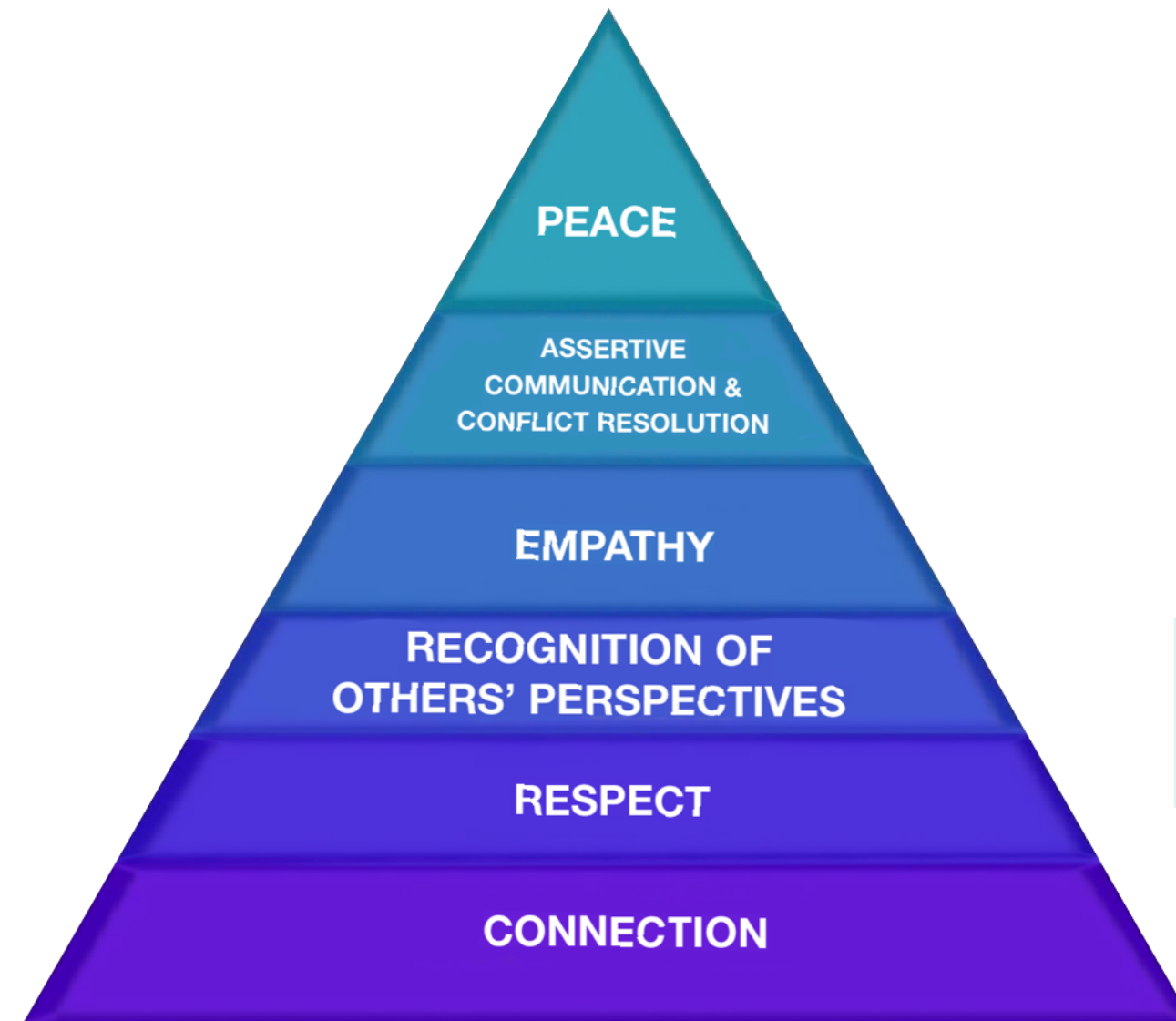


**The Future of Peace**

A window into The Mosaic Project's primary program, the Outdoor Project



**Dismantle the Pyramid of Violence**



**Build the Pyramid of Peace**

## Dismantle the Pyramid of Violence and Build the Pyramid of Peace

The tools, tips, and guiding questions that follow will empower you and your family to navigate interpersonal interactions to work toward more inclusive, equitable, and just communities. They will help you to dismantle the Pyramid of Violence and build the Pyramid of Peace. We frame our tools and tips in the context of these pyramids because our individual interactions do not exist in a vacuum. Rather, they are influenced by the societal systems in which we live, and they also have the power to shift these systems.

The systems that are set up to make us feel that we are separate from each other are very powerful. Our children continue to grow up segregated with limited exposure to those different from themselves. As the Pyramid of Violence shows, this is dangerous. Separation can easily lead to ignorance, fear, prejudice, discrimination, violence, and more separation.

Simply bringing people together from different backgrounds, however, is not enough to break this cycle. Diversity without authentic connection is still segregation. Research in Contact Theory demonstrates that to overcome prejudice and create true community, people need prolonged contact with one another, common goals, equitable treatment, a diverse team of role models, and effective communication and conflict resolution tools. Critically, issues of prejudice and systemic inequality must be directly addressed.



### The Color of Law

The Mosaic Project with Richard Rothstein, Author of The Color of Law: A Forgotten History of How Our Government Segregated America

This is exactly what we do at The Mosaic Project. We work towards a peaceful future by uniting people of diverse backgrounds, providing them with essential community-building skills, and empowering them to become peacemakers. We dismantle the Pyramid of Violence and build the Pyramid of Peace.

We are delighted to share some of the core Mosaic lessons with you, and we are grateful to have you by our side on the path toward social change. Our individual interactions have been shaped by history and also have the power to shape our future. We hope that these tools and tips will support you and your family as you work to build a more just, peaceful future where everyone can thrive!

**How do you see the Pyramid of Violence and the Pyramid of Peace at work in your school, office, or community?**





2

**M**utual Respect  
**O**pen Mindedness  
**S**elf Respect  
**A**ttitude  
**I**ndividuality  
**C**ommunity

## Create Community Agreements

When building an inclusive, equitable, and just community, it is important to have agreements about how we will live, learn, work, and play together. If everyone has a hand in creating these agreements, they are more likely to endure. You can use our MOSAIC agreements as a starting point:

**M**utual Respect

**O**pen Mindedness

**S**elf Respect

**A**ttitude (an awesome one!)

**I**ndividuality

**C**ommunity

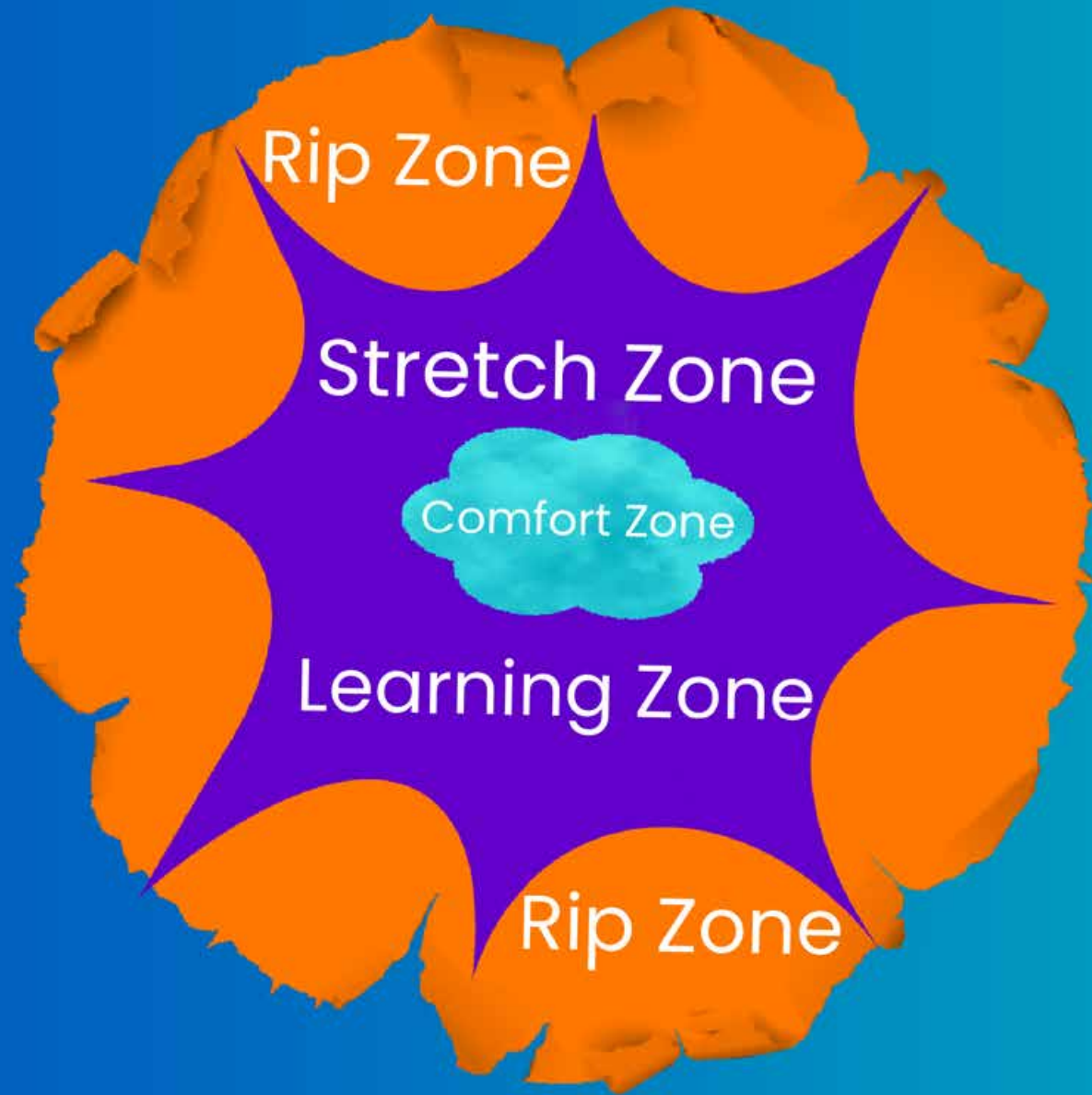
We also ask that everyone does their best to use the [Three Keys to Peace](#) [#12], assume good intentions, and give each other the benefit of the doubt. Most of us do not intend to hurt other people. When we acknowledge that and take the discussion about intention off the table, we can focus on the impact and make sure any harm gets addressed.

What do each of the MOSAIC agreements mean to you? What other agreements would you like to have in your school, workplace, or community?



[The Mosaic Project Theme Song](#)

# 3



## Enter the Stretch Zone

Exploring issues around diversity, equity, and systemic oppression can be uncomfortable, which is often a good thing: it means we are entering our Stretch Zone and learning and growing!

There are multiple states of being. The first is our “Comfort Zone”: it feels like a warm bed, or hanging out with the people you know best. It’s easy and effortless and we can navigate it without much thought. It is important to have spaces of comfort, but if we never leave these spaces then we never grow. Remember — the fish only grows as big as the fish bowl.

If we venture all the way out into our Rip Zone, we’ve stretched too far and shut down to learning.

The Stretch Zone is our Learning Zone. It can be a messy, complicated zone, but when we figure out how to navigate it, it can be exhilarating. The more time we spend in our Stretch Zone, the more comfortable we will become there, and

our Comfort Zone will in fact expand to include experiences that were previously in our Stretch Zone. What was once awkward becomes familiar as we learn new ways of being. We are then ready to take on more challenges.

We encourage you to enter your Stretch Zone as you try out the tools described in these pages.

**When have you challenged yourself to enter your Stretch Zone and what did you learn?**

**5 Tips for Talking about Race and Difference** from The Mosaic Project



It's  
you and me  
against the  
problem.

## Work Together Towards Justice

Mosaic's core principle of conflict resolution is: **"It's not you and me against each other, but the two of us against the problem."** This is essential to keep in mind as we work together to create more inclusive, equitable, and just communities. Each of us has a different history with, perspective on, and connection to the problem of systemic oppression. It takes all of us working together to create a better future.

In what ways can you bring your unique knowledge and experience to work together with others to create more justice?



MOTV (Mosaic TV YouTube Series)  
Fan in the Window #3 "Joaquin":  
Racism Keeps Everyone Down



5

We are all  
interconnected.

## Honor Our Interconnectedness

Not only do we have the power to change the future, we will change it, because we are all interconnected. **Our actions do affect the world around us. And so does our inaction.** Our feeling peaceful, happy, and healthy is tied to everyone else feeling peaceful, happy, and healthy. Therefore, we all benefit from a more inclusive, equitable, and just world.

How have your actions – and inactions – affected those around you?



MOTV Episode 4:  
"Interconnectedness"



We see what we  
expect to see,  
and we don't see  
what we don't  
expect to see.

## Acknowledge That We See What We Expect to See

This is an amazing characteristic of the human brain. It helps us quickly make sense of the world around us. It helps us to read quickly without having to process every letter and every word. It's why you were able to read and understand that last sentence even though it had missing and misplaced words and letters. This characteristic becomes a liability, however, when proofreading our own writing. It becomes a major liability when we take these mental shortcuts with other people and see them for who we expect them to be rather than for who they really are.

This is especially dangerous when we live in a segregated society and don't have personal connections with people different from us. Then we rely on the stereotypes around us in the media and in what others say to inform us about what people of other skin colors, genders, and backgrounds are supposed to be like. We end up seeing

stereotypes rather than true, complex individuals.

**When have you seen others for who you expected them to be rather than for who they really are?**



**MOTV Episode 6: "Look Again"**



Stop stereotyping.  
Prevent prejudice.  
Demolish discrimination.

## Understand Stereotypes, Prejudice, Discrimination, and the Isms

Understanding the following terms helps us recognize them in our communities and in our own interactions. This is the first step to helping stop them.

**Stereotype:** a label; a generalization about a whole group of people applied to one person, without regard for individuality. When we stereotype others, we dehumanize them and this makes it impossible to empathize with them.

**Prejudice:** a judgment made about someone without knowing the person.

**Discrimination:** an action based on stereotypes and prejudice.

**Ism:** discrimination + institutional power.

**Sexism:** discrimination based on sex or gender + institutional power.

**Ableism:** discrimination based on ability + institutional power.

**Racism:** discrimination based on race + institutional power.

Given this definition of racism, “**reverse racism**” does not exist.

When was a time you witnessed or experienced an act of discrimination? When was a time you discriminated against someone else?



**Comedian Aamer Rahman** provides a detailed explanation of why there is no such thing as reverse racism.



# Re-spect. Look again.

## Re-spect

What can we do to break through our biases when we find ourselves stereotyping others and prejudging them? We can re-spect. Re = again. Spect = look. We can look again.

We can work to overcome our tendency to see what we expect to see and not see what we don't expect to see.

If we are truly respecting others, we are constantly looking again and doing our best to see beneath the surface through to the depth of who they really are.

**Think about times when you prejudged others. How have people surprised you when you re-spected them, or looked again, and saw them for who they really are?**



**MOTV Episode 2:  
"Quarantine Queen"**





# ACTS OF EXCLUSION send messages that:

You don't belong.

You're invisible.

You're a threat. You're not an individual.

You're inadequate. You're a curiosity.

You're not normal. You're a burden.

## Recognize Acts of Exclusion

Acts of exclusion, also known as micro-aggressions, are sometimes subtle, sometimes overt, sometimes conscious, and sometimes unconscious. They can look like this:

- You don't belong.  
*Only passing the ball to other boys and no girls on the playground.*
- You're invisible.  
*Addressing only the friend of someone who is visually impaired, rather than talking to the visually impaired person directly.*
- You're not an individual.  
*Mistaking the only two people of the same ethnicity in a group for one another and calling them by the wrong name.*
- You're not normal.  
*Calling out the one LGBTQ+ person in the room to represent and explain all LGBTQ+ people.*
- You're a burden.  
*Rolling eyes when someone asks a question.*

Beware of "gaslighting." Gaslighting negates the thoughts, feelings and experiences of others — for example, telling someone who just experienced an act of exclusion based on race that the incident had nothing to do with their skin color.

**Describe an act of exclusion or microaggression that you have witnessed, experienced, or even committed. How did you address these moments?**



**Leveraging the Interpersonal  
for Social Change**

The Mosaic Project with Dr. Michael Baran, Coauthor of  
**Subtle Acts of Exclusion**

# INTENTIONAL ACTS OF INCLUSION send messages that:

You belong.

You are valued.

Your contributions matter!

## Perform Intentional Acts of Inclusion

Intentional acts of inclusion can look like:

- Saying hello to everyone when we arrive and in the hallways, and saying goodbye when we leave.
- Acknowledging and appreciating people's contributions.
- Making sure everyone gets a chance to speak up in meetings if they want to.
- Giving the opportunity for people to share ideas through different means (written, spoken, one-on-one, groups, etc.).
- Using the [Three Keys to Peace \[#12\]](#)!

What intentional act of inclusion can you perform today?



[All I Really Need to Know I Learned  
in Kindergarten by Robert Fulghum](#)



# The 3 Peace Blockers

🚫 Blame

🚫 Guilt

🚫 Defensiveness

## Know the Three Peace Blockers

There are three attitudes that block our ability to connect with others to make effective change. These are easy traps to fall into, and they prevent us from making progress.

🚫 **Blame:** to say or think that someone else is responsible for something bad that has happened (e.g., “This is all your fault!”). When we blame others, we give our power away by focusing on what they are doing rather than on what we can control. In addition, when we blame, often others can’t even hear what we’re saying — they just get defensive.

🚫 **Guilt:** a painful feeling of regret caused by thinking that you have done something bad or wrong, sometimes caused by blame (e.g., “I’m such a poor performer!” or “I’m such a bad student!” or “It’s all my fault!”). While it is sometimes appropriate to feel guilt so you can take responsibility and move on, if we dwell on it, guilt can lead to inaction.

🚫 **Defensiveness:** a high sensitivity to criticism or blame (e.g., “You’re wrong. I didn’t do anything. You’re misunderstanding me. I’m not being defensive!”). When we jump to defend our actions before listening to others’ perspectives, we are unable to empathize and solve the problem.

**Have an honest conversation with yourself... When have you noticed yourself falling into one or multiple peace blocker traps?**



**MOTV Episode 7:  
“Conflict Resolution Part 1”**



# The 3 Keys to Peace

- 🔑 Listening
- 🔑 Empathy
- 🔑 Assertiveness

## Use the Three Keys to Peace

There are Three Keys to Peace:

- ✔ **Listening:** When we listen with an open heart, we can help others to feel valued and empowered.
- ✔ **Empathy:** When we imagine what it might feel like to be someone else and truly empathize with them, it is very difficult to treat them badly.
- ✔ **Assertiveness:** When we are strong without being mean, we stop the spread of hurt so we can connect honestly and authentically with others.

How might you use these three keys in a current situation you are facing?



Rise Up for Racial Justice: How to Build Inclusive Communities and Support Our Youth

The Mosaic Project with Dr. Crystal Fleming, Author of How to Be Less Stupid About Race



# Listening

Just by listening,  
you can help  
others feel so  
good!

## The Listening Key

Listening Tips:

- Give full attention with your ears, mind, and heart.
- Make not just eye contact, but eye connection.
- Beware of “predatory listening,” or listening for an opening to comment or attack. Instead, listen for understanding. Really try to hear what the other person is saying without making assumptions or reacting.

Think of a time when you shared about something important to you and you could tell that the other person was not listening. How did it feel? Think of a time when someone did listen to you. How did that feel?



NPR's Life Kit Podcast: **Want to Listen Better? Turn Down Your Thoughts and Tune in to Others**



# Empathy

Telepathy is  
mind-reading.  
Empathy is  
heart-reading.

## The Empathy Key

When we empathize, we try to put ourselves in another person's shoes and understand what it might feel like to be them. We'll never know exactly how it feels, but it helps to try.

It is especially important to empathize if you are in a position of power or privilege.

Can you think of a time when you were very angry with someone, but then were able to empathize with them? How did your thoughts and feelings change once you empathized?



[MOTV Episode 3: "boB"](#)





# Assertiveness

Strong  
without being  
mean, kind  
without being  
weak.

## The Assertiveness Key

Assertiveness is being strong without being mean and being kind without being weak. It is a superpower — it can stop the spread of violence in its tracks so that we can spread peace instead.

In order to be assertive, we must also use the first two Keys to Peace — [Listening \[#13\]](#) and [Empathy \[#14\]](#). The first two Keys help us build understanding and trust. From that foundation, assertiveness helps us to stop the spread of hurt so we can authentically connect.

When we are assertive, we advocate for ourselves and communicate our feelings and needs without invalidating those of others. We are respectful of ourselves as well as those around us. **We use our body language, what we say, and how we say it to be calm, cool, collected, confident, and clear.**

Being assertive might not always get us what we want, but it is often our best option to interrupt violence and make

our voice heard. We cannot control other people's behavior; we can only control how we respond. It does take a lot of practice to respond assertively. It isn't always easy to be calm, cool, collected, confident, and clear, especially when we feel angry or scared.

**What makes it challenging for you to be calm, cool, collected, confident, and clear? How can you overcome these challenges?**



[MOTV Episode 5: "Assertiveness"](#)

# Passive vs. Aggressive vs. Assertive

## Understand Passive vs. Aggressive vs. Assertive

Understanding what is *not* assertive can help us understand what *is*. When we are *not* assertive, we can be:

- **Passive:** allowing someone to invade our space and taking flight or freezing, thereby taking in the poison of hurt, hatred, or violence; giving our power away.
- **Aggressive:** invading someone else's space with a fight; throwing the poison of hurt, hatred, or violence at others; trying to have power over others.

Instead of being passive or aggressive, we can choose to be **assertive**: protecting our own space, thereby blocking the spread of negativity; neither taking it in, nor throwing it out at others; asserting our power *with* rather than *over* others; and being strong without being mean and being kind without being weak.

Hurt people hurt other people. That is why aggression spreads and escalates so easily. It takes a lot of strength to stop spreading it and to be assertive.

**Can you think of a moment when you were passive or aggressive? How might the outcome have been different if you were assertive instead?**



**Cardi Peace Teaches  
Assertiveness at Mosaic's  
Outdoor Project**



“If you have come here to help me, you are wasting your time, but if you have come because your liberation is bound up with mine, then let us work together.”

– Aboriginal Rights Group,  
Queensland, Australia

## Be an Assertive Ally

**Assertive allies** stand for inclusion, equity, and, ultimately, belonging. They stand *with* others (rather than *for* others) so no one has to stand alone.

Assertive allies help those in conflict find a fair way to move forward. An assertive ally does not take sides with individuals, but rather is on the side of peace and justice. They understand that we are all interconnected [#5] and that one's well-being is interconnected with the well-being of all.

Assertive allies are empowered to take action toward positive change out in the community, at home with their families, and in the workplace.

When was a time you were an assertive ally or felt supported by an assertive ally? When was a time you wished you had stepped up as an assertive ally?



MOTV Fan in the Window #2  
“Alex”: Assertive Allies



# Ask Assertive Questions with curiosity and an open heart.

## Ask Assertive Questions

To work together towards equity and inclusion, we need to **communicate for understanding rather than argue to be right**. As author Stephen Covey said, "Seek first to understand, then to be understood."

We can seek to understand and empathize, rather than blame, by asking assertive questions with curiosity and an open heart.

### Assertive Questions:

- Please, share more about that. What do you mean by that?
- Where did you hear or learn that?
- Have you ever considered \_\_\_\_ (another perspective)?
- It seems that so-and-so feels hurt/threatened/intimidated/pressured. Was it your intention to hurt/threaten/intimidate/pressure them? Did you mean to do that?
- Could we revisit this conversation?

What might get in the way of your asking assertive questions before sharing your own thoughts and feelings? Why might it be helpful to ask questions first?

**Assertiveness and Differences**  
from The Mosaic Project

# I-Statements

I feel...

When I...

Because I need...

And could you...

## Use I-Statements

Once we've sought to understand, it's time to share to be understood. I-Statements are easier to hear than "you"-statements, or blame-statements, because they don't put others on the defensive. With I-Statements, instead of blaming, we invite others to empathize with us.

We can use this I-Statement framework to guide our communication:

FEELING

**I feel** \_\_\_\_\_ (*Heart Feeling*)

SITUATION

**When I** \_\_\_\_\_ (*No Blame*)

NEED

**Because I need** \_\_\_\_\_ (*Heart Need*)

REQUEST

**And could you** \_\_\_\_\_ (*Specific Request*)

Example:

**I feel** *sad*

**When I** *see that there are no girls of color speaking at the school assembly about student leadership*

**Because I need** *fairness*

**And could you** *add more speakers to represent and encourage the diversity of student leadership?*

What is far more important than the exact formula or words we use is the spirit behind them. That spirit is one of assertiveness rather than blame — one that invites empathy rather than defensiveness.

**How might you activate the I-Statement framework to invite empathy and connection?**



**I-Statement Boogie**  
at Mosaic's Outdoor Project





## Consider the Situation, Relationship, Goals, and Resources

When deciding if or how we want to respond to acts of exclusion, or any challenging interpersonal interactions, it can help to consider the following:

- **Situation** – Where am I? Who is nearby? Do I feel safe physically or emotionally?
- **Relationship** – Who are the others involved? Are they strangers or acquaintances? Are they friends or family?
- **Goals** – What do I want to happen? Do I just want to vent and let others to know I am angry or upset? Do I want empathy? Do I want to open them up to learning?
- **Resources** – Do I have the time, energy, and emotional bandwidth to address the situation?

If the situation does not feel safe, the best choice is often to walk away while staying calm, cool, collected, confident, and clear, regardless of the other considerations. Even if we do feel safe, we may still choose to walk away if we are dealing

with strangers or we don't have the time or emotional bandwidth to engage.

On the other hand, if we are invested in the relationship, we may choose to engage even when we don't have much bandwidth. The goals of building understanding and fostering connection may outweigh the costs of the emotional effort.

When dealing with a close friend or family member, it may be necessary to delve deeper into the learning process with them. If they are willing partners, the [Five Tools for Assertive Conflict Resolution](#) [#21] can be helpful.

**How might these four considerations impact your response to an interpersonal challenge you currently face?**



**The Four Considerations**  
from The Mosaic Project



# 5 Tools for Conflict Resolution



## Stop



## Listen



## Talk





## Empathize





## Plan


## Apply the Five Tools for Assertive Conflict Resolution

 **Stop**, cool off, and take a deep breath. Take a moment, and do whatever you need to do to feel calm, cool, collected, confident, and clear.

 **Listen** to how the other person feels and what they need. Learn about their perspective. We have two ears and one mouth, so we should listen at least twice as much as we talk.

 **Talk**. Speak assertively, being strong without being mean and kind without being weak. Use [I-Statements](#) [#19].

 **Empathize**. Put yourself in the other person's shoes, and try to understand how they feel. Let them know that you are doing your best to understand.

 **Plan**. Brainstorm solutions and work towards a win-win plan — one in which everyone may not get everything they want, but their most important needs get met.

How might you apply these five tools to address a conflict you are currently facing?



[MOTV Episode 8:  
"Conflict Resolution Part 2"](#)



Thank you for reading and *Peacing It Together* with us! We would love to stay connected and **invite you to join the Mosaic family!**

**PARTICIPATE IN  
OUR PROGRAMS**

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OUR EVENTS**

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