



THE mosaic PROJECT

ACTION GUIDE FOR BUSINESSES

We are in a moment of reckoning. The COVID-19 pandemic is revealing and heightening separation, fear, discrimination, and inequality between groups of people. We are also experiencing a groundswell of awareness and activism around systemic racism due to the recent murders of Ahmaud Arbery, Breonna Taylor, Tony McDade, and George Floyd. Of course, we know we did not get to this point overnight. There have been countless acts throughout history, from overt to subtle, from systemic violence to microaggressions, that have brought us here. Our interpersonal interactions have been shaped by this history, and also have the power to shape our future.

That is why The Mosaic Project created this Action Guide for navigating interpersonal interactions to create more just, equitable, inclusive workplaces. Since 2000, The Mosaic Project has provided over 65,000 individuals from diverse backgrounds with immersive, experiential education programs in equity, empathy, and effective conflict resolution. We hope our tools, tips, and guiding questions provide some much needed support for those who are committed to building organizations where everyone can thrive!



12 TOOLS & TIPS FOR TAKING INTERPERSONAL ACTION FOR SOCIAL CHANGE

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The Mosaic Project



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**It's
you and me
against the
problem.**

1

Mosaic's core principle of conflict resolution is that, "**It's not you and me against each other, but the two of us against the problem.**" Each of us has a different history with, perspective on, and connection to the problem of systemic oppression, and many of us share a common goal to create a more inclusive, just society.

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

2

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 equitable, just, and inclusive world.

How do your actions — and inactions — affect those around you?

**We are all
interconnected.**

**The acts of the
past have shaped
you and me.**

**Our acts in the
present shape
the future we'll see.**

Stop stereotyping.

Prevent prejudice.

**Demolish
discrimination.**

3

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.
- **Isms:** Discrimination + institutional power.
- **Racism:** Discrimination based on race + institutional power.

What is a time you experienced, witnessed, or acted on discrimination?

Re-spect. Look Again.

4

What can we do when we find ourselves stereotyping others and prejudging them? **We can re-spect. 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.

Have people ever surprised you when you respected, or looked again at them?

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There are 3 attitudes — whether towards individuals or towards groups — that block our ability to connect with others to make effective change. These are easy traps to fall into, and they prevent us making progress.

1. Blame. To say or think that a person is responsible for something bad that has happened. “This is all your fault!” When we blame others, we give our power away and often the others can't hear what we're saying. They just get defensive.

2. Guilt. A painful feeling of regret caused by thinking that you have done something bad or wrong, sometimes caused by blame: “I'm such a poor performer/ person!” “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.

3. Defensiveness. A high sensitivity to criticism or blame. “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 the other person's perspective, we are unable to empathize and solve the problem.

The 3 Connection Blockers:

- 1. Blame**
- 2. Guilt**
- 3. Defensiveness**

Do you ever notice yourself falling into these traps?

The 3 Keys to Connection:

1. Listening
2. Empathy
3. Assertiveness

6 There are 3 Keys to Connection.

1. **Listening.** Just by listening to others, we can make them feel valued and empowered.
2. **Empathy.** If we're truly empathizing with others, it's impossible to treat them badly.
3. **Assertiveness.** This stops the spread of hurt so we can connect honestly with others.

What situations can you imagine in which you might use these keys?

7 Listening is the 1st Key to Connection.

Tips for listening:

- Give full attention with your ears, mind, and heart.
- Make not just eye contact, but eye connection.
- Listen for understanding, rather than for an opening to comment or attack.

Can you think of a time when all you really needed was for someone to listen?

**Just by listening,
you can help
others feel
valued.**

**If telepathy is
mind-reading,
empathy is
heart-reading.**

8 Empathy is the 2nd Key to Connection.

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.

When we are truly empathizing with others, it's impossible to treat them badly. It is especially important to empathize if you are in a position of power or privilege.

How does it feel when someone empathizes with you? How does it feel when they don't?

Assertiveness:

**Strong without
being mean,
kind without
being weak.**

Can you think of a time when you have been an assertive ally or when you were supported by an assertive ally?

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Assertiveness is the 3rd Key to Connection. In order to be assertive, you must also use the first 2 Keys — **Listening and Empathy.**

Assertiveness is a superpower. It stops the spread of hurt so you can honestly connect.

Assertiveness allows you to stand up for yourself and others in a way that is respectful of yourself and everyone around you. It helps you make your voice heard.

Assertiveness is communicated through your

1. Body Language
2. What you say (the words you use)
3. How you say it (tone of voice)

These 3 components must all align to show that you are **calm, cool, collected, confident and clear.**

Assertive allies help others in times of need by standing with them so they do not have to stand alone.

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Understanding what assertiveness is not can help us understand what it is.

Passive: Allowing someone to invade your space, thereby taking in the poison of hurt, hatred, or violence. Giving your power away.

Aggressive: Invading someone else's space. Throwing the poison at others. Trying to have power over others rather than sharing it with them.

Assertive: Protecting your own space, thereby blocking the spread of poison. Not taking it in, or throwing it out. Asserting your power **with** rather than **over** the other person.

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.

**Passive vs. Aggressive
vs.
Assertive**

Can you think of a time when you were passive or aggressive? How might things have gone differently if you had been assertive instead?

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Effective Messaging

With effective messaging, instead of blaming, you invite the other person to empathize with you and understand where you're coming from. You communicate to be understood, not to be right.

You can use this effective messaging framework to guide your communication:

1. **What actually happened?** (observation vs interpretation)
2. **What was the impact?** (impact vs intention)
3. **What do you want to happen now?** (specific request)

Example:

What actually happened? The panel of experts speaking at the company-wide meeting is comprised of all white men.

What was the impact? This sends a message to our employees that contradicts our firm-wide commitment to promoting diverse leadership.

What do you want to happen now? Let's add speakers and diversify the panel.

1. **What actually happened?**
(observation vs. interpretation)
2. **What was the impact?**
(impact vs. intention)
3. **What do you want to happen now?** (specific request)

What would you say in this moment using this framework? To whom would you say it?

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5 Tools For Assertive Conflict Resolution

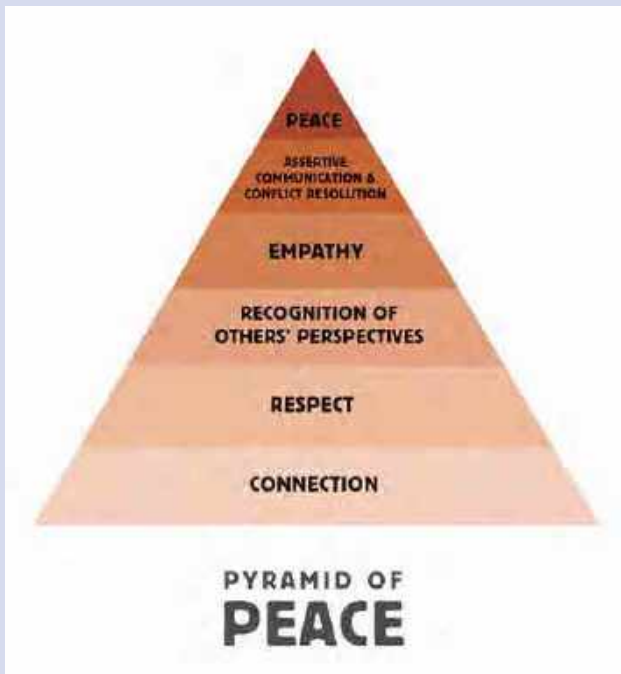
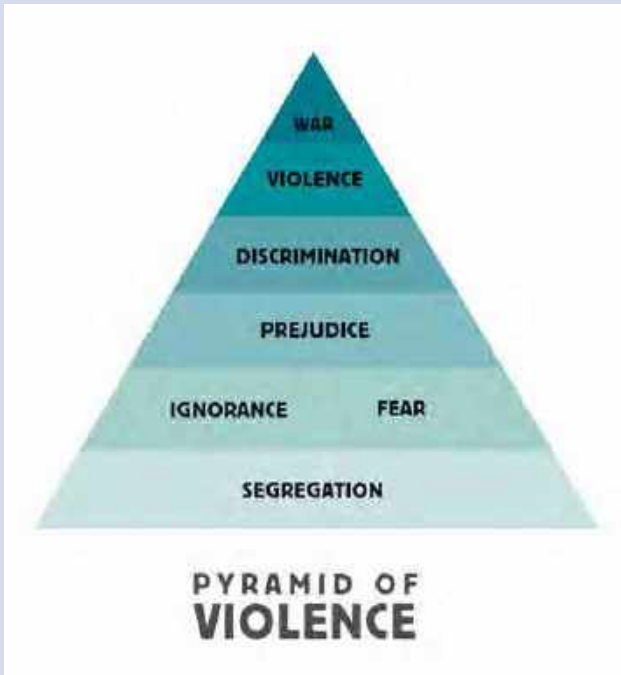
1. **Stop.** cool off, and take a deep breath. Take a moment, and do whatever you need to do to feel calm, cool, collected, confident and clear.
2. **Listen.** Listen to how the other person feels and what they need. Learn about their perspective. We have two ears and one mouth, so we should listen at least twice as much as we talk.
3. **Talk.** Talk assertively, being strong without being mean and kind without being weak, using effective messaging (see above).
4. **Empathize.** Put yourself in the other person's shoes, and try to understand how they feel. Let them know you heard what they said.
5. **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.



Have you used any of these tools in working through a recent conflict? Is there a current conflict you are facing in which it might be helpful to try using them?



The Pyramids of Violence and Peace: The Theory Behind Our Work



The Mosaic Project works to dismantle the Pyramid of Violence and build the Pyramid of Peace in all we do. These pyramids are a visual summary of our curriculum. We feel it is essential to frame interpersonal interactions in this context because our individual interactions do not exist in a vacuum. Rather, they are shaped by the societal systems in which we live, and also have the power to shift them.

Whenever possible, we begin our work at the foundation of the pyramids by bringing people together to build connection. Research¹ shows, however, that if we are to address the prejudice and violence that stem from segregation, it is not enough simply to bring diverse individuals together. The systems that are set up to make us feel we are separate are very powerful. If we are truly to unite to build equitable, just, inclusive communities, we must be extremely intentional about it. When we come together, we must work toward common goals, address issues of prejudice head-on, and learn skills for authentic interaction and assertive conflict resolution.

That is what we do in Mosaic’s primary program, our Outdoor Project. This immersive program brings together 4th and 5th grade classes from schools that differ racially, ethnically, and socio-economically for a week in nature. Our experiential curriculum directly addresses issues of difference while building self-esteem and community.

We are grateful to be with you on the path towards social change. We hope that these tools and tips will support you and your colleagues as you work to build a more equitable, just, inclusive workplace.

¹ <https://mosaicproject.org/about/approach/theory/research/>

CORPORATE TRAINING & CONSULTING

The Mosaic Consulting Project (MCP) offers customized corporate trainings and consulting on topics including:



DIVERSITY, EQUITY AND INCLUSION



EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION & CONFLICT RESOLUTION



OVERCOMING BIAS AND ADDRESSING RACISM

Our dynamic trainings are experiential, involving transformative facilitation strategies and activities, as well as providing concrete tools. As you invest in your employees, you also invest in your community. Net proceeds from MCP directly fund The Mosaic Project’s youth programs. To schedule a consultation, please visit:

<https://mosaicproject.org/programs/mosaic-consulting-project/>