



Managing Derogatory, Discriminatory & Racist Statements

The National MS Society has a no tolerance policy regarding derogatory, discriminatory, racist or any other oppressive language targeted at a specific group of people.

People may be unaware that their language is disruptive and/or inappropriate. Unless the language is threatening or extreme, the person should be given an opportunity to self-correct. Direct and honest conversation and education with the person, citing the language, as well as the potential consequences if self-correction does not occur -- may bring forth resolution.

During these challenging interactions, your role is to take a moment to recognize what issues are the individual's and what are yours, in terms of buttons they may have triggered for you. This may help to provide more clarity as you seek to identify a viable solution, which may include terminating the conversation/interaction.

In those rare instances when a warning or attempt to mitigate the language fails, the decision to terminate the conversation should be communicated to the individual.

Example Statements to Use

“You just used a word that is derogatory. We do not tolerate that language within our conversations. I am asking you to not use that language and should you use it again, I will have to ask you to leave.”

“You just used a racist statement. I am requesting that you refrain from using that language during our conversation. The National MS Society has a no tolerance policy when it comes to derogatory, discriminatory, and racist language. If you are not able to conduct a respectful discussion, then we cannot move forward with this conversation. Let us remain focused on your needs related to MS.”

“Due to the continued use of (derogatory, discriminatory, racist) language, I am ending our conversation and I am asking you to leave our group setting/I am ending our phone call. When you are ready to communicate in a respectful manner, please contact the National MS Society. Goodbye.”

The National MS Society hopes you never have to address derogatory, discriminatory, or racist statements within your Peer Connections Volunteer role. Should the need arise, however, we want you to feel empowered to know the Society's policy and have language you can use. Always contact your Staff Partner following any situation described above for support and additional guidance.
