

Using Hot Buttons

Below is one suggested way you can facilitate conversations about race using Hot Buttons. However, feel free to come up with your own ideas to engage people in courageous conversations.

Goals:

- Increase participants' ability and experience with having courageous conversations about race.
 - Engage participants in talking about issues that create tension across cultures but are rarely discussed.
 - Create a safe environment where participants can explore their feelings and reactions to statements that push their buttons.
1. Choose your own hot button and share it with participants. Explain why you chose it, e.g., *I chose Politically Correct, because it bothers me when people dismiss me as 'politically correct'.*
 2. Explain why we're talking about this.

When people try to avoid making statements or remarks that push our buttons it can be seen by others as 'just trying to be PC' (politically correct). The real purpose of being conscious of what we say is to show that we truly care and want to act with respect towards one another, being mindful of how our words affect them.

These buttons are not about trivializing our concerns, but validating the subtle forms of racism and discrimination we most often deal with rather than the more overt acts or statements. Recognizing other people's hot buttons is a way to deepen our understanding of their experiences. Recognizing our own buttons is important so that when someone says this or acts this way, we know where that feeling is coming from in our gut. It also gives us an opportunity to think about how we might respond.

3. Everyone chooses a personal *Hot Button* and pins it on (have them spread out on a table).
 - a) In groups of 3 or more, each person has time to share why they chose the button they chose, what it means to them when someone says it, and how they feel physically when they hear it. Encourage asking courageous questions to take the conversation deeper.

OR

- b) Participants walk around the room and find a partner. They discuss why they chose the button they chose, what it means to them when someone says it, and how they feel physically when they hear it. Encourage asking each other questions. After both have shared, they find a different partner.

