Words are powerful. Even with the best intentions, our immediate reactions during tough conversations can sometimes be dismissive, offensive, or unproductive, undermining inclusive dialogue. It’s important to use words that demonstrate understanding, partnership, and a commitment to continued communication. Respond with heart by staying engaged and open when discussing difficult topics, which helps to resolve conflicts and work collaboratively across differences.¹

Be SUPPORTIVE during tough conversations by listening to others to encourage, rather than stifle, dialogue.

Show CURIOSITY by asking questions, being open to new or different perspectives, and being willing to go beyond what is familiar or comfortable. You’ll learn more about yourself and others.

Demonstrate HUMILITY by accepting that your views may be incomplete. Listen with humility to better understand others and show you are open to learning and thinking differently.⁷
Express **EMPATHY** by showing that you understand and appreciate another point of view or experience. Acknowledge that your words and actions may have had a different effect than what you intended.9

Communicate **COURAGEOUSLY** by leaning into difficult conversations, rather than shutting them down. Doing this signals that you are willing to talk about tough or “undiscussable” issues.11

Demonstrate **ACCOUNTABILITY** by taking responsibility for how your words and actions affect those around you. Use words and actions that demonstrate you want to work toward a constructive conversation.13