

Responding to Customer Hate Speech & Bigotry

Be an UPstander, not a bystander: *whether you know the victim or not, there are things that you as a bystander can safely do to support the victim: don't laugh, don't encourage the bully in any way, don't become an "audience" for a bully, reach out in friendship.*

Assess your surroundings. A heated exchange with a stranger or customer can escalate; assess the situation before you respond. Is the speaker with a group of people? Is the space deserted? Are you alone? Are children present? Consider such things before responding. Stay at a safe distance and help the target get away.

Say nothing. A questioning glance may be an effective and non-confrontational response in a situation in which you feel unsafe speaking directly. Keep moving. Regardless of what you do in the moment, discuss or report with your co-workers or a community advocacy organization.

Say something. If you choose to raise the issue, state your beliefs clearly: "I find that language very bigoted. It offends me." Or, "I think it's wrong to stereotype people."

And since heightened emotions in the moment might preclude you from accessing your rational brain, it can help to have an "I" statement -- like "I'm uncomfortable when someone speaks like that, so please don't do that around me" -- ready in your pocket.

Do something. Refer to the "Hate Has No Home Here" or similar signage posted in the business or refer to your company policy which may state something like: We do not discriminate or tolerate prejudice or hate speech here. Model kindness and inclusivity toward people who may be different or targeted.

Breathe2019

Report the incident. Report what happened to the person in charge, to the rental agency of the property, and/or to an advocacy group like The Peace Center in Bucks County. Local advocacy groups, like the NAACP Bucks, The Rainbow Room for LGBTQ Youth, and local human relations/human rights/minority alliances, often keep check on the pulse of a community. Call them; let them know what you heard, when and where. They may see patterns you don't and can work with local government or groups to address ongoing concerns.

