

## Keys to Remember

1. **Admit feelings of nervousness:** It's helpful if we admit that we are anxious or unsure about how to engage the conversation. It's okay to say that we have recently been exposed to some new ideas and are trying to make use of this information. In this way, we allow ourselves to become vulnerable in the situation and are more likely to receive support and understanding.
2. **Ask permission prior to getting personal:** Lots of people are told that expressing interest is a great way to initiate conversation across race. And that may be true. But, it's also important to recognize that many people won't be interested in delving into a conversation about race. And, even fewer might be interested in readily opening up regarding their feelings. Remember to ask if the person is willing to talk with you about his/her personal feelings before you ask about them.
3. **Treat everyone as an individual:** The worst thing we can do is only focus on a person's racial background. This can translate into questions such as, "How does it feel as a \_\_\_\_\_ person when \_\_\_\_\_?" Instead, we should ask "how does it feel for YOU when \_\_\_\_\_?"
4. **Prepare for rejection:** There will be plenty of people who will NOT appreciate your approach. No matter what you do and how sincere your motivations, since people have widely varying expectations, you are likely to offend or annoy someone at some point. Be prepared to hear that you've made a misstep in that person's mind. It's okay to ask what that person would have preferred...or so simply apologize. Listen to the critique. Accept that person's truth. Consider how you may change your approach based on that person's critique. And then continue to do your best as you move forward.