

A Model for Mutual Respect

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AN ENVIRONMENT OF MUTUAL TRUST AND RESPECT IS NECESSARY if an institution seeks to act with integrity. They are prerequisites for open communication and honest dialogue about the values, goals and expectations held by the institution and its members. Trust and respect require freedom of expression without fear of retribution, institutional or otherwise. Respect for the diversity of persons, ideas and choices differing from one's own strengthen the culture of the university. Establishing and supporting a diverse community encourages discovery and creativity. If trust should break down, we need to explore the reasons for the breakdown and identify ways for the community to rebuild trust among its members.

The principles of mutual respect are simple and straightforward to write, but are challenging to put into practice in a consistent manner. The spirit of mutual respect supersedes its definition.

The following questions are suggested to establish conditions for mutual respect:

DO I HEAR YOU?

Did I allow you to finish your thought?

Did I hear what you have to say?

Do I understand your point of view?

WHAT IS MY FRAME OF MIND?

Are my actions motivated by fear or anger?

What am I communicating non-verbally?

Am I putting you into a category and acting on the ascribed characteristics of that category?

Can I pause, breathe and think before reacting?

HOW CAN I HELP?

Can you help me understand your frame of mind?

Will my actions reduce hostility?

Will my response escalate or deescalate the situation?

Will my response humanize or dehumanize the person?

How are we relating to one another?

Am I in danger?

Are you in danger?

