

Based on previous best practice principles section this section provides some practical tips and tricks on how to handle challenging situations in the classroom. Some of the challenging situations will be revisited in [Readiness To Learn](#) when we help students to develop skills in challenging discrimination and becoming more aware of their biases and stereotypical images.

The principles of using challenging situations as they arise to increase learning:

Situations where discriminatory behaviour is exhibited, can sometimes be used as opportunities for learning. Begin by assuming that most people do wish to practice in an inclusive, respectful manner but may not know how to. Suggest to the learners that in the class we will be open to comments made or behaviour in the classroom being explored to look at how they may discriminate against, upset and reduce life chances for the person or people spoken about – however unknowingly on behalf of the person involved.

Setting up a [group learning agreement](#) will give the opportunity to ensure that all members of the class understand the expectations of the class and get the group to look at the challenging behaviour to see how it could be done differently in a way that is inclusive but also why it could exclude or be offensive to people in its current form. Some tips that can be helpful in these situations:

- 1 Give the responsibility to your group. It is not solving or managing it as a teacher. It is enabling your group to work through it. It is a growth of the class.
- 2 What do they think about what has been said? Does it fit in our group contract? (see [Setting up a safe and inclusive learning environment](#))
- 3 It depends, everyone has a journey, someone who doesn't want to be part of it should be given space, don't put them in the spotlight or force them to join.
- 4 It is about facilitation skills. You don't have to know everything as a teacher.

The following situations give some strategies of how one might deal with common situations which arise in the classroom and which teachers have suggested are challenging. You could also use them in class in order to explore the issues- before they arise and as such could help develop your learners' skills and insight into the area explored in practice.

#### Activity 1: [LGBT+ and religion](#)

This scenario is designed to help teachers in the classroom where students voice their struggle to reconcile their belief that their faith suggests that homosexuality is wrong with their wish to be inclusive – Teachers can use the scenario to prepare themselves for this type of challenge or they could use it in class to promote discussion and ideas to help students who face this challenge.

Scenario (Film script, - teachers could make the script into a short film if they wished or could get students to read out the script if they wished to use it in class.)

Student "But this is against my religion. I don't agree with homosexuality/trans people")

Teacher: "I can see that you have sincerely held convictions to do with your faith. In our classroom, we are very respectful of people's beliefs – religious or otherwise. This must be quite a dilemma for you as I know that in this class we are all preparing to improve the lives of others and in particular LGBT+ older adults. The Equality Act 2010 in the UK places an expectation that we as professionals and citizens value people of faith but also that we value and treat as equals people who identify as LGBT. Some of us will have a journey to find out how we can fully support the principles of all aspects of the Act and we have a responsibility to seek out help to support us on that journey. I think it is great that you have brought it up today. Did you know that other people from your faith and other religions are able to follow their religion and are also able to value the lives of LGBT+ people? It might be helpful for you to listen to their experiences to help you in your dilemma. I would like the whole class to become familiar with the resources from the websites for LGBT+ people of different faiths. Let's find out what you have all found out from them in class next week" END

Having read it, get the students to discuss the situation.

We would also recommend that you have looked at 1.00 Civil Rights and give your learners access to websites of support groups for LGBT+ people of faith for extra support and learning.

### **Activity 2: Challenge homophobic behaviour**

This scenario is designed to help teachers challenge homophobic/ heteronormative language, providing some concrete examples.

Scenario Script -(Film script, - teachers could make the film script into a short film if they wished or could get students to read out the script if they wished to use it in class.).

The teacher overhears a group of students teasing each other and laughing at each “You’re so gay” . The teacher might respond by saying “Sounds as if you are having fun together. You may not have realised that using the word Gay to criticise someone- however humorously meant, is actually very hurtful. Can you think why?” The issue could then be dropped temporarily but the teacher would take it up more broadly at the end of the session. “Let’s revisit our learning agreement to end the session. part of the learning agreement was about using respectful language. How might someone whose identity is used as the butt of a joke- how might they feel? For example using the term “You are so gay!” ” (students given time to answer) “We have all grown up in discriminatory environments and we may not even be aware of how hurtful or harmful some terms. How can we become more aware so that we can avoid being hurtful or offensive? (expectation is that the students would suggest that they need to tell each other- including the teacher!) If the students do not come up with this the teacher would have to suggest it.