

### 1.3 Readiness to learn Challenging situations

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What	Challenging situations
Purpose	How to cope with challenging situations
Target group	Students
Level	Level 2-3-4 in vocational education
Execution	Preparation of the teacher
Sources	Game

This section will lay down some principles in order to work productively and to encourage learning when challenging situations occur. The principles described below should be included in a group learning agreement set out at the beginning of the learning sessions. We will address how teachers might work with the potential for challenges and discriminatory behaviour by setting up clear expectations of behaviour which have been negotiated with the class so that the students are more likely to buy into them. We have also used pedagogic methods of being proactive in presenting the possible challenging behaviour to the class BEFORE it happens. We do this by exploring certain scenarios with the class where people are behaving in a discriminatory way. By getting students to think about the implications of such behaviour on others, they can develop better insight into the impact but also develop skills in how to deal with discriminatory behaviour both in class and I practice. The following scenarios therefore are at times set in the class room and sometimes in practice. Exploring discriminatory behaviour one might encounter in practice may well be a safer space for students to begin as it may feel at more of a distance than immediately addressing behaviour in the classroom. It is important to allow students the space to change their views, to identify discriminatory behaviour and heteronormative language and to understand why such behaviour is likely to be harmful to others.

However, discriminatory behaviour in class does need to be addressed directly and we offer a couple of scenarios for the teacher to consider as options to maximise learning for the whole class.

Set the scene in class, by also referring to non-discriminatory laws and code of conducts of the school (e.g. anti-bullying programmes) to make students aware of the level playing field and set the ground rules against discrimination in the classroom. Although educators may not always agree with the views expressed by learners, they need to model how to disagree in a respectful manner, as well as how to challenge ideas without being disrespectful to the person by putting them down. Strategies to manage strong emotions within the classroom need to be considered especially where narratives may be sad, expose bad practices or conflict with personal values. In order to handle these challenging situations in the classroom this resource provides a set of tips and tricks from teachers themselves.

#### Guidelines

1. Situations where discriminatory behaviour can sometimes be used as opportunities for learning.
2. Begin by assuming that most people do wish to practice in an inclusive, respectful manner but may not know how to; that they will be open to having it explained how our comments or behaviour may discriminate against, upset and reduce life chances for the person or people spoken about – however unknowingly the comment or behaviour.
3. Use the group learning agreement to help the group to remember 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 people in its current form.

Once you have these principles in place; pre-empt challenging behaviour by setting up the following scenarios for the students to discuss. You will ask them two questions:

1. Why is this discriminatory and may cause upset or reduce life chances?
2. How could this be dealt with differently to promote being respectful and valuing diverse sexualities and genders in older people?

### Scenarios to use in the classroom to develop skills for practice

Explain to the class that they might encounter discriminatory behaviour in practice and these scenarios will help them to consider how to manage them and promote more inclusive behaviour

#### Scenario 1

The worker is going to meet a new resident in the care home they work in. Their colleague says “ Be careful when you meet him – they say he is “One of those” and you know what they are like!”

#### Scenario 2

A worker is asked to work with an older woman whose same sex partner has recently died. The woman is sad and constantly talks about her regret that they had never got married or had children” The worker says to her supervisor “I’m not homophobic but they should keep it to themselves and not involve children- I mean- their being parents- I don’t agree with that!”.

#### Set up

Divide the class into smaller groups to discuss the scenarios and to come up with the feelings and values of everyone involved and the implications for the service users if the views went unacknowledged and changed. Ask them to think about effective ways to challenge the comments. Encourage the students to think about what further information they might need to help them challenge more effectively (legislation, research, and knowing families of diverse family shapes) Then get feedback in the larger group.

The teacher will then summarise the principles and strategies for effectively challenging. Talk to the class about behaving respectfully to all- even those expressing discriminatory behaviour and that this is likely to be more productive for learning. Remind the class that being respectful does not mean not challenging the person’s views but finding a way to help them to see how such behaviour and views are likely to be harmful to the people they will be working with.

Finally reflect on how the class would like to proceed if any of the class needed to work through views, which they now realise are discriminatory.

Remind that class that there are college rules/ legislation which prohibit discriminatory behaviour but that it is important to give people a safe space to realise the implications of discriminatory views rather than silencing them, as they are less likely to change their practice if they are not able to work through the behaviours and gain insight into how they harm others.

#### Keep on learning

The teacher could use “[The Game](#)” as an alternative to some of the scenarios described above. A playful manner to learn about different cases, situations and facts and figures.