

# Calling In and Calling Out Guide

In fostering spaces of inclusion and belonging, it is important to recognize, name, and address when individuals or groups with marginalized identities are experiencing harm, such as bias or discrimination. The concepts of "calling out" or "calling in" have become popular ways of thinking about how to bring attention to this type of harm. Knowing the difference between these concepts can help us reflect, then act, in the ways we feel will best promote constructive change.

## What Is Calling In and Calling Out?

### Calling In

- Calling in is an invitation to a one-on-one or small group conversation to bring attention to an individual or group's harmful words or behavior, including bias, prejudice, microaggressions, and discrimination



### Calling Out

- Calling out is bringing public attention to an individual, group, or organization's harmful words or behavior



### Why Would I Call Someone In or Out?

- To stop the perpetuation and negative effects of harmful words or behavior
- To create a compassionate space for listening, understanding, offering new information, and correcting assumptions
- To lean into having tough conversations with people in your sphere of influence - the individuals or groups you know personally, and that will be open to conversation with you



**Note:** Calling in and calling out are not mutually exclusive strategies. Depending on the situation, calling out could precede calling someone in for a follow-up conversation.

## What Should I Consider When Calling In or Out?



### Calling In

- **Influence** - You have influence with this person through a personal (e.g. close relationship) or professional (e.g. work colleague) connection
- **Safety** - A one-on-one or small group conversation will not compromise your safety or wellbeing
- **Openness** - This person has demonstrated an openness and commitment to learning how to better foster spaces of inclusion and belonging



### Calling Out

- **Urgency** - There is an urgent need to hit "pause" to prevent further harm to others or yourself, and make it clear to others present that you are not in agreement with what is being said or done
- **Influence and Safety** - There is a specific power or relationship dynamic that would render calling in harmful, unsafe, or ineffective for you
- **Openness** - Previous attempts to call in have been unsuccessful

## How Do I Call In or Call Out?



### Calling In

- "I'm curious. What was your intention when you said that?"
- "How might the impact of your words or actions differ from your intent?"
- "How might someone else see this differently? Is it possible that someone else might misinterpret your words/actions?"
- "Why do you think that is the case? Why do you believe that to be true?"
- "What is making you the most fearful, nervous, uncomfortable, or worried?"



### Calling Out

- "That's not our culture here. Those aren't our values."
- "I don't find that funny. Tell me why that's funny to you."
- "It sounded like you said \_\_\_\_\_. Is that what you really meant?"
- "I need to push back against that. I disagree. I don't see it that way."
- "I need you to know how your comment just landed on me."
- "It sounds like you're making some assumptions that we need to unpack a bit."

**Note:** While the phrases above may be more suited for an interpersonal (calling in) or public (calling out) setting, they can be used in either setting.

## Remember

### Patience



- Try to be patient and understanding, keeping in mind that you will also sometimes cause harm with your words or actions

### Self-care

- If you are the target of the harm, make sure you are taking care of yourself (you may not have the capacity or ability to call in or call out right now and that's okay)

### Find Allies

- Identify allies for support and to step in, so that the burden is not on you
  - If you are an ally, act as an upstander to call in or call out when you see the harm being done, without being asked to do so
  - Reflect on your own identities and privilege, noting how they may make you more or less effective, safe, and able to call in or call out (e.g. if you have racial privilege, it may make it easier or safer for you to call out racial harm)

## What Do I Do When Someone Calls Me In or Out?



- **Pause** - take a breath. Ground yourself to receive what they have to say.
- **Listen** - with the intent of learning and seeing things from their point of view
- **Acknowledge** - take responsibility for the impact of your words or actions
- **Reflect** - process your thoughts and emotions. It may help to do so with a trusted partner who will not only have grace for your mistake, neither defending your actions nor condemning you.
- **Repair the harm done** - change your behavior going forward, inviting trusted partners to hold you accountable to learning and doing better



- Don't beat yourself up or go on a shame spiral; try to be kind to yourself
- Don't make the person calling you in or out be your emotional caretaker, especially if they are the recipient of the harm (that is centering yourself and may add to their emotional labor)
- Remember: You're not a bad person. You are an ever changing and evolving person and this is just one step in your growth.

## References

1. Veronica Dea Santana, Assistant Director of Diversity, Inclusion, and Belonging, Office for Diversity, Inclusion, and Belonging, Harvard John A. Paulson School of Engineering and Applied Sciences
2. Corine Rosenberg, Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Belonging Specialist, Office of Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Belonging, Harvard Graduate School of Education
3. Interrupting Bias: Calling Out vs. Calling In, Dr. Rebecca Eunmi Haslam, Seed the Way LLC

## Additional Resources

1. 6 Signs Your Call-Out Isn't Actually About Accountability - Everyday Feminism
2. When Calling Out Makes Sense - Briarpatch Magazine
3. Speaking Up Without Tearing Down - Learning for Justice
4. You've Been Called Out for a Microaggression. What Do You Do? - Harvard Business Review