UNDERSTANDING RESISTANCE

ASSOCIATION OF AMBULANCE CHIEF EXECUTIVES

A GUIDE TO SUPPORT THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE WORK PROGRAMME 'REDUCING MISOGYNY & IMPROVING SEXUAL SAFETY'

Understanding reasons behind resistance.

WHY

HOW

How resistance can present.

Helpful strategies to implement.

WHAT

WHEN

When to seek advice and support.

There can be various reasons why some may be resistant to conversations about misogyny and sexual safety. It's important to note that these reasons can vary from person to person and may not apply universally.

It's important to approach such conversations with empathy, patience, and a willingness to listen and understand different perspectives. Creating a safe and inclusive environment for dialogue can help address resistance and foster meaningful discussions.

This guide should be read in conjunction with these 3 publications.

IMPORTANT

This guide should NOT be used for addressing criminal, safeguarding, or mental health concerns. Examples include but are not limited to, behaviour not aligning to professional standards or organisational values, a disregard of the Equality Act 2010, engagement with discriminatory or hateful content and links to extremism.

WHY: UNDERSTANDING POSSIBLE REASONS BEHIND RESISTANCE

- Lack of awareness or understanding: We may not be fully aware of the extent and impact or may not understand wider implications. This lack of awareness can lead to resistance or dismissiveness towards conversations.

- Fear of change or perceived challenge to existing power structures or societal norms.

- Defensive reactions: Conversations about misogyny and sexual safety can sometimes evoke defensive reactions, as some feel personally implicated or accused. Defensiveness can hinder open and constructive dialogue.

- Cultural or social conditioning: Societal norms and cultural beliefs can shape people's perspectives and attitudes. In some cases, deeply ingrained beliefs or cultural norms may contribute to resistance.

- Misconceptions or stereotypes: Misunderstandings or stereotypes about feminism or discussions on misogyny can also contribute to resistance. Some individuals may hold misconceptions about the goals or intentions behind these conversations, leading to resistance or opposition.

HOW: HOW RESISTANCE CAN PRESENT

FREEDOM THREATS

Motivated to maintain the threatened opinion or behaviour.
E.g Normalised banter

CONCERNS OF DECEPTION

Feel our belief system is correct, and are more defensive of our attitudes.

RELUCTANCE TO CHANGE

Change involves going from the known to the unknown and implies a loss of control over our situation.

AVOIDANCE

Avoidance (including selective avoidance) is a way of protecting our self. E.g Disengagement

Based on Fransen, M.L., Smit, E.G. and Verlegh, P.W.J. (2015)

WHAT: HELPFUL STRATEGIES TO IMPLEMENT

1. Respect individual perspective, whilst considering the responsibility to notice concerns and refer to professional standards and organisational values: Avoid forcing the conversation but where possible, be curious and ask questions to deepen your understanding. Be prepared to act upon any concerns highlighted on Page 2.

2. Provide context and refer to the evidence base: Share available data, personal stories, or examples to improve understanding of the significance of these issues and the impact on workplace culture.

3. Focus on shared values: Find common ground by highlighting shared values such as equality, respect, and creating safe environments. Draw on healthcare specific professionalism and ethics standards. Emphasise that addressing these issues benefits everyone, contributing to a more inclusive environment and improved patient care.

4. Encourage open dialogue: Create a safe and non-judgmental space for discussion. Encourage honesty, openness and actively listen to their perspective. This can help foster a more constructive conversation.

5. Make learning accessible: Provide educational resources that explore related topics in more detail, enabling learning at an individual pace.

EXAMPLE 1

'I don't know what I can say anymore.' or 'Diversity has gone too far.'

(Freedom Threats and Concerns of Deception)

We may feel victimised if someone felt uncomfortable with something we said because it has previously been unchallenged. It is often not about the intent of what we say but the impact this can have on others.

We are all human and sometimes say the wrong thing so creating an environment where non-inclusive language is better understood will be more progressive than being disregarded as 'you can't say that' or 'know your audience'.

Offering a different perspective and enabling learning are helpful strategies to refer to.

EXAMPLE 2

'I have never seen these issues, I don't think the problem is that bad.'

(Avoidance)

If we haven't been on the receiving end of unacceptable behaviour or perhaps there is normalised humour/banter within the environment we work in and nobody around us seems to have a problem with this, then we may feel surprised or in denial.

Bringing attention to available data which may include personal stories will help with improving awareness and understanding.

Encouraging colleagues to ask and listen to those who may be affected may help improve engagement.

EXAMPLE 3

Raising a different issue entirely (sometimes referred to as 'whataboutery')

(Freedom Threats, Concerns of Deception & Reluctance to Change)

Nobody is exempt from any kind of discrimination or harassment and all experiences and feelings are valid. This programme of work pays attention to the impact societal pressures have on men's mental health in particular and it may be helpful to remind colleagues of the previous Suicide Prevention programme.

Feelings of not being represented or forgotten about, may arise for colleagues which can be deep rooted and complex. It's important to acknowledge such feelings, perhaps signposting to more relevant communities or support routes.

Important topics deserve their own discussion. Not allowing conversations about misogyny and sexual safety to become derailed requires patience and drawing on evidence.

SEEKING ADVICE & SUPPORT

Contact info@aace.org.uk to be connected with the lead for this work programme.

Examples

- Complexity or sensitive nature: When conversations become centred around individual experience or trauma, it is important that appropriate support is signposted to.

- Lack of expertise or experience: If you identify gaps in knowledge and understanding within your organisation, we can provide support with this.

- Feeling alone: Engaging in what can sometimes be challenging conversations can take its toll, and you are not alone, with a community of support available.

- Feeling unsafe: If at any point you are concerned for your safety, it is important you speak to your Safeguarding Lead and/or notify the Police.

- Uncertainty: Anything that leaves you feeling unsure and it would help to have an impartial view.

- Systemic resistance: If you are concerned about organisational barriers.