

DIFFICULT SITUATIONS TABLE TOP EXERCISE - FACILITATOR GUIDE

The goal of the difficult situations exercise is to provide a forum for supervisors across DIR to engage their staff in discussions about how they would respond to specific situations, in an effort to create an environment where team members are safe and supported in their careers. As part of these exercises, supervisors may ask staff to walk through the example situations provided and re-count situations that may have happened to them in the past.

These exercises can take place at your convenience (should happen at least one time per year).

To support the facilitation of these sessions, you will find the following:

- Tips for facilitating a discussion
- Step by step guide for exercise facilitators
- Customizable exercise scenarios
- Frequently Asked Questions
- Caltech's Unlawful Harassment policy (dated 8-16-17)

TIPS FOR FACILITATING A DISCUSSION

The thought of our team members or ourselves being in a situation that is uncomfortable or potentially inappropriate is one that some of us do not want to think about or would rather ignore. Asking people to mentally rehearse how they would respond to such an event may evoke some anxiety and discomfort.

However, there is evidence that imagining such things ahead of time produces a psychological “inoculation effect” which promotes greater psychological resilience and leads to a more effective response in the event of an actual situation.

When facilitating discussions about uncomfortable situations or harassing behavior, please keep in mind that everyone interprets these situations a little differently. Some members of your group may automatically think of the worst possible scenario while others will deny that such an event could ever happen to them.

Please encourage anyone who wants to share their views to do so. Validate the person's concerns and briefly try to explore what would make them feel more at ease.

To be an effective facilitator, consider your own level of comfort in talking about the topic.

Prepare yourself with what your own plan would be if you were involved in one of these situations.

Think about the setting and audience ahead of time and, if possible, anticipate various situations. How would you respond? What would you say? Would it be easier to speak up or politely remove yourself from the situation? What would you do after the uncomfortable encounter?

A STEP BY STEP GUIDE FOR EXERCISE FACILITATORS

Thank you for engaging in a tabletop discussion. A tabletop exercise is a group discussion that examines scenarios and asks individuals to consider their own response to a fabricated situation. It is our hope that by spending time preparing for these types of situations, our team members will have the ability to react appropriately and proactively.

Our goal in conducting these exercises is to:

- Prepare individuals to handle unexpected situations
- Challenge participants to consider what their personal response would be in situations where they are uncomfortable
- Identify gaps in our procedures

IN ADVANCE OF THE EXERCISE

- Determine when the discussion will take place, e.g. during a weekly staff meeting
- Consider customizing the exercise scenarios provided to reflect your work environment
- Decide if staff will also be asked to role play their responses
- Advise your participants of the activity and scope
- Make copies of the participant handout
- If you have additional questions, concerns, or would like more information prior to the exercise, contact DIR's Talent Management Team

ON THE DAY OF YOUR EXERCISE

- Convene individuals involved in the exercise. Begin by explaining the format and purpose of the exercise
- Provide participant handout
- Discuss at least one scenario that you have customized to reflect your work environment

AFTER THE EXERCISE: DEBRIEF PARTICIPANTS

- Debrief immediately following the exercise (this can be done at another time if necessary)
- Remind participants of resources available on campus
- Ask participants opinion on the effectiveness of the exercise

DIFFICULT SITUATIONS TABLE TOP EXERCISE - SCENARIOS

SCENARIO 1: VOLUNTEER USING RACIALLY/GENDER INSENSITIVE LANGUAGE

You are orienting an alumni volunteer to his volunteer role and he tells you, “affirmative action has hurt the excellence of Caltech’s research.”

Questions:

- a. How would you react? Ask individuals to be specific about their potential responses. For example, one person may respond with, “I would ignore this statement and move him away from others” another may respond with, “I have not found that to be the case.” It is important that participants consider the scenario and mentally rehearse what they would do in that situation.
- b. Who could or should you tell about the situation?
- c. What resources would you contact to help manage the situation?
- d. Ensure to elaborate on why you chose this course of action.
- e. If you are a bystander in this scenario, what actions might you take?

SCENARIO 2: PHYSICAL TOUCHING

You are working at an event and one of your long-term donors comes over to you and gives you a hug. At the end of the hug, this donor purposely touches your behind and then winks at you.

Questions:

- a. What initial actions would you take? One person may respond with, “oh, please don’t touch.” Another person may just walk away. Ask individuals to be specific about their actions.
- b. Who could or should you tell about the situation?
- c. What resources would you contact to help manage the situation?
- d. Ensure to elaborate on why you chose this course of action.
- e. If you are a bystander in this scenario, what actions might you take?

SCENARIO 3: CHAIRS COUNCIL MEMBER INCITING POLITICAL CONVERSATION

During a luncheon for your Division's Chair's council meeting, a council member begins to discuss policies of the current administration. She says immigration has gotten out of control and we need to keep foreigners out of our country.

Questions:

- a. How would you respond to this statement? One person may confront the council member another person may try to re-direct the conversation. Ask individuals to be specific about their actions.
 - b. Who could or should you tell about the situation?
 - c. What resources would you contact to help manage the situation?
 - d. Ensure to elaborate on why you chose this course of action.
 - e. If you are a bystander in this scenario, what actions might you take?
-

SCENARIO 4: PROSPECT DRINKING TOO MUCH

You schedule a prospect meeting at a restaurant, the potential donor orders a cocktail. While you have your meeting, she orders additional drinks and begins to act too familiar with you. It becomes clear that she is inebriated.

Questions:

- a. How would you respond? One person may respond with, "I am starting to feel ill, may we wrap up?" another may say, "We still have a few agenda item to cover before wrapping up." Ask individuals to be specific about their actions.
 - b. What is your course of action to ensure your safety and the safety of your prospect?
 - c. Who could or should you tell about the situation?
 - d. What resources would you contact to help manage the situation?
 - e. If you are a bystander in this scenario, what actions might you take?
-

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

1. Who should be told about these situations?

There are various individuals that can be told about situations of this nature: your supervisor, DIR Talent Management, Caltech Human Resources, or the Staff and Faculty Consultations Center are all great options.

2. How do I know if a situation is truly inappropriate?

Your supervisor, DIR Talent Management, Caltech Human Resources, or the Staff and Faculty Consultation Center can help you determine the severity of individual situations.

3. Is my job at risk if I register concern about our donors/volunteers?

NO. As stated in [Caltech Unlawful Harassment Policy](#) assment.pdf, “No member of the Caltech community will be retaliated against for making a good-faith report of harassment or for participating in an investigation, proceeding, or hearing conducted by Caltech, or by a state or federal agency. Overt or covert acts of retaliation, reprisal, interference, discrimination, intimidation or harassment against an individual or group for exercising their rights under federal and state laws is unlawful. Caltech will take steps to prevent retaliation and will take prompt and appropriate corrective action if retaliation occurs. Individuals who violate this policy may be subject to disciplinary action up to and including termination of employment or permanent separation from the Institute.”