Coping with a Bias Incident

The Counseling and Student Development Center (CSDC) at Bucknell aims to help students grow in self-understanding, use their intellectual and emotional resources as effectively as possible, and provide a supportive “safety net” for when students encounter difficult or painful life circumstances. In this spirit and in light of the recent incident of hate speech broadcast on Bucknell’s radio station, we offer the following information and resources.

An incident of this sort characteristically produces myriad emotional responses, including among others hurt, anger, dismay, disillusionment, and fear. Students and the rest of the community might very well feel confused about what to do, whether and how to engage in difficult conversations, and generally feel at a loss as to how to move personally and interpersonally through such a hurtful and painful campus event. We understand that issues of race and bias, while pervasive, are also complex. Confronting these issues requires skills in self-reflection, emotional management and communication.

It is normal to be upset following an incident of bias of the sort that has been exposed recently on our campus. It is also normal to feel in a quandary. This confusion can apply to uncertainty about how we think and feel about events, how to talk with others about it, or what to do about the issues that are raised by such an incident. In short, sometimes we are left feeling frustrated and even powerless. We may wonder how to proceed during a time such as this when we are called upon individually and as a community to “step up” and confront within, between and among ourselves the ignorance, fear and misunderstandings that fuel all toxic bias.

While it is normal and expected that you might be experiencing a wide range of emotions, such reactions can add to stress at an already busy time of the academic year. This should prompt us to question our level of self-care (i.e., how we as individuals are coping with the emotional and psychological demands posed by such a community-wide incident). **Tips for managing during this time include:**

- Identifying our spheres of control and influence. What can each of us reasonably control and influence that will make a contribution to our own and others’ coping effectively during this time? We can identify our own feelings and manage them, inform ourselves, listen to others, and intentionally engage in meaningful conversations and activities related to the event and the beliefs and attitudes that fuel such hate.
- We can ask for help from friends, family, staff, faculty and the CSDC. This incident of racial bias is a community concern. As such, the hate exposed by this incident need not be confronted alone; rather, it begs to be resolved through community. Helping one another, especially by listening and striving to understand, is critical to our moving forward toward creating a more just and peaceful Bucknell community.

Please feel free to contact our office if you wish to talk about this incident and some of the options for coping now and going forward.

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