



# Pause. Breathe. Connect.

## Having challenging conversations

Being part of challenging conversations is normal but sometimes we can get caught up in difficult conversations with non-Indigenous people, and even our own mob.

This can cause harm and impact our social and emotional wellbeing, particularly when there is increased mainstream interest in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander affairs.

You don't have to be part of those conversations if you don't want to, but thinking about ways to stay safe within them can be useful.

Non-Indigenous people can make hurtful, ignorant, racist or culturally biased comments, or expect us to be able to speak on behalf of all mob. You can step out of these conversations if you don't feel safe, say it is not the right time or place, or ask allies to step up.

Our mob, friends, family and community can also criticise our stand on issues or try to shift our opinion, in person, on social media, or in other settings.

Consider the environment in each case: do you feel safe and comfortable and is it the right time to bring up or be part of difficult yarns? Pause if you feel the yarn is becoming heated, harmful, or hurtful; step away, look to come back only if you feel comfortable and safe. If you are feeling stressed, remember to **Pause. Breathe. Connect.**

### How to have safe yarns...

#### ...with non-Indigenous people

Don't feel you have to engage – give yourself an out, it is ok to respectfully leave a conversation to give yourself space.

Remind them you are not the 'spokesperson' for all things related to mob.

Ask non-Indigenous friends or colleagues to step up, to do some of the heavy lifting with other non-Indigenous people.

#### ...with Mob

Understand where other mob might be coming from in their thinking.

Be careful to not use blaming language like 'you' but rather use 'I feel'.

Remember to remain positive and focus on what is important in your relationship, especially when with family or community members where there is an important connection beyond the topic.

### Impacts of challenging yarns

- ▶ Feeling unsafe.
- ▶ Feeling like you don't have a voice, or your views aren't respected.
- ▶ Feeling misunderstood.
- ▶ Feeling guilt, anger, shame, or frustration.
- ▶ Feeling like you must engage when it is causing you distress or is not in a place where you feel safe.
- ▶ Feeling like you don't have the answers.

### Pause.

Turn off devices or remove yourself from uncomfortable situations if you can. It is ok to need time out, trust your gut reaction and trust yourself.

### Breathe.

Pause and focus on your breath.  
Breathe in for 4.  
Hold for 4.  
Breath out for 4.

### Connect.

Yarn with mob. Walk on Country.  
Listen to the sound of Country.  
Connect with culture through stories, song, dance, or anything that keeps you culturally strong and feeling deadly.

### And remember to reach out to support services if you need: