



# “Stop it!”

## Sample Conversation Script

As obvious as it is to you and possibly others that this behaviour should not have happened, it is safe to assume that the person who behaved inappropriately does not see it the same way, or they would not have done it. It is likely that this person has done this action before and was not challenged. This silence generally communicates to people that what they did is acceptable.

### 1. Introduce the conversation. This generally needs to be in private.

If you are not certain this is safe, you can have a private conversation in a public space. This can make it feel safer.

**Example:** “Do you have a minute?”

### 2. Name the action. Pause momentarily.

**Examples:**

- “When I walked into the council chambers the other day, you were making comments about how my spouse and I are having marital problems.”
- “You criticized my personal style and outfit, in front of all of council, before I arrived.”
- “At the council meeting yesterday, you dismissed all the concerns I raised.”

### 3. Invite the person to respond. They will likely defend themselves.

They will likely want to defend themselves by saying it was a joke, or telling you not to be so sensitive, etc. If they do, let them say a couple of sentences and interrupt them and move to point #5.

#### 4. Share impact (optional)

If they really do not seem to understand why their behaviour is inappropriate, you can choose to inform them. Information and education are often necessary if the atmosphere on council has silently permitted this kind of behaviour. Articulate the impact the behaviour had on you in a few short sentences.

#### 5. Clarify expectation

##### Examples:

- "I need to tell you, honestly, that my spouse and I are having a rough time right now, but I don't need the added stress of the whole council knowing."
- "If my style or lack thereof is an issue, I would be happy if you told me directly. What does not work for me is to have you criticize me in front of all of council, when I am not there to defend myself or on something personal like that in general. If you have an issue with me, I would expect you to discuss it with me in private, just like this."
- "I want to address how you dismissed my concerns at the meeting yesterday. I value your opinions, and I would appreciate the same courtesy from you and other members. This is how we can best serve the municipality."

#### 6. End conversation (tactfully/gracefully).

Often and at this point, it is awkward, as much as they may agree with you, it is uncomfortable to have it pointed out. People will be defensive. Try closing by saying something like "Thanks—I appreciate you considering this."

If possible and to be more transparent, if you are going to file a code of conduct complaint, you would let them know. "I appreciate you listening to me, and agreeing to take steps to prevent this from happening again. I hope it does not come to this, but if these kinds of actions continue, I will feel it necessary to file a code of conduct complaint."

**NOTE:** A conversation like this makes it awkward between you and the other person for a while. It is very important that future interactions with them are as if this conversation never happened. In other words, do not avoid them; continue to treat them professionally and respectfully.

## **In the Moment**

---

There are some situations where it is best to respond in/during the moment of disrespect. This is difficult and, yet, if you are prepared for what you can say, it is possible to do it clearly and respectfully.

Situations where responding in the moment would be ideal would include:

- A sexist or racist comment about a group or individual
- A joke about another group that is demeaning
- A harsh critical comment about someone else on council that is not present
- A piece of juicy gossip about another person that is not flattering

These types of comments are best responded to in one or two sentences. The goal is to clearly communicate that this behaviour is not okay and do so in a way that is respectful and leaves most of the person’s dignity intact. Strong public confrontation typically results in shaming the other person and often humiliates people. As a result, it is hard for people to learn in these situations.

If you do not speak at times like these, your silence or smile will likely be perceived as condoning and possibly even participating in the disrespectful behaviour. As a council member, you will have inadvertently participated in a moment that may undermine your credibility.

### **Possible responses:**

“I am uncomfortable with this conversation because Jerry is not here to share his perspective.”

“We do not say things like that here.”

“That joke is inappropriate, and we have agreed not to joke about things like this.”