

## Volunteer Training Resource

*How to represent AllianceQ and gracefully engage others in public spaces*

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- Learn About Conflict Management
  - Conflict arises from differences.
  - Conflict can also arise from an unmet need within the other person.
    - Everyone has a need to feel safe, secure, respected, and valued. Some people search for or attain this belonging by expressing what they are *against*. Protestors at Pride are seeking their own sense of belonging. They are being influenced by their own inner loneliness, hurt, anger, pain, trauma, and/or what their community leads them to believe.
  - Myths about dealing with difficult people
    - Ignoring the problem will make it go away
    - No one else notices; I'm the only one that this is bothering.
    - I can fix/change the problem person
    - If I engage in their argument, I will be able to change their mind
    - If I'm really the caring and all-accepting person I should be, I can handle them
- Have A Safety Plan
  - Choose one person from each volunteer shift who consents to be the assigned "safety" person. If a confrontation becomes physical, or escalates to the point of needing more support, this point person will know that it is their responsibility to seek outside support (calling 9-1-1, retrieving a community resource officer, asking a witness from another organization to step in, for example).
  - Hopefully, nothing will escalate to a level where an emergency call must be made, or a police officer retrieved to intervene. However, knowing that there is always someone on the volunteer shift whose responsibility it would be to attain that kind of help should it become necessary will help foster a sense of safety for those serving as volunteers, and diminish anxiety for those who may be addressed by protestors.
- Practice De-escalation Techniques
  - Calm Repetition
    - Protestors may try to address volunteers with difficult or attacking questions. Be prepared with a uniform response to these questions, and practice saying them in a non-anxious tone prior. Practice repeating them with a partner volunteer, who will take the role of an agitated protestor. Remember to trade roles.
    - Example:
      - **Protestor:** Why is a church here? God hates gay people!
      - **Volunteer:** We're here to model God's love for all people.
      - **Protestor:** Yeah, but the Bible says that homosexuality is an abomination!
      - **Volunteer:** We're just here to model God's love for all people.
      - **Protestor:** You said that already! Don't you hear what I'm saying? God hates you for being gay!
      - **Volunteer:** We are here to model that God loves all people.
  - Stay Aware of Your Body
    - Take a deep breath; stay in control of your emotions and behavior. Remember that when confronting conflict, it is important to remain both calm and alert.

# Disciples Alliance

- Be aware of your non-verbal communication
  - Eye contact, facial expression, tone of voice, posture, gestures.
  - Be direct but non-aggressive.
- Pay attention to the feelings being expressed by the person, as well as the spoken words. Be ready to respond as is necessary and appropriate.
- Responding to Criticism
  - Make the relationship your priority (graceful engagement)
  - Focus on the present
    - Who is this person?
      - This person who is berating you while you table at Pride may be offending and insulting you, they are **not** a representative for every person who has ever hurt you over your LGBTQ+ identity or allyship before.
      - As mentioned previously, this person is seeking belonging.
    - Remember where you are and who you are with.
      - Be conscious of the temptation to project your feelings onto this person
      - You do not have to agree with this person or appreciate how they are treating/speaking to you, but it is important to remain calm and choose non-aggressive words.
      - Have a thought, an image that grounds you, something you can return to mentally if you feel verbally attacked.
  - Do not choose to pick a fight - there is no winner.
    - People who will approach strangers to share their contrasting opinion are probably not people who are genuinely seeking better understanding about a topic. If they are getting under your skin or trying to pick a fight, remember that when we as God's children fight over peoples' inherent worth: there is no winner. Everyone will leave that discussion with a bad taste in their mouth, and possibly even more frustration towards the "other."
    - There are some groups, like Westboro Baptist and the Proud Boys, who **really** want there to be physical contact, **even if it's slight**. That's how they make money, through lawsuits for "assault" when people like Pride volunteers engage.
    - It is absolutely critical that volunteers understand that and keep a physical distance. And that they keep their voices calm.
  - Set boundaries and re-enforce them.
    - If a protestor is violating your spatial or physical boundaries:
      - Move away from them - take a step back or away from this person
      - Communicate with them - "Please do not touch me / stand that close to me"
    - If they continue to violate your spatial or physical boundaries:
      - Communicate again - "I do not want to be touched / I need you to not stand so close to me"
      - If possible, move behind the table or use a fellow volunteer as a "buffer" - moving so that their body is between yours and the protestor
      - Trust that a safety point-person will pay attention and retrieve help, as necessary
        - If you are the safety point-person, it will be the responsibility of your fellow volunteers to support you and seek outside support, as necessary
      - Do not be afraid to walk away.