



# Navigating Hot Moments

in the Classroom



# Difficult or “Hot” Moment

A ‘Hot moment’ is a sudden eruption of tension or conflict in the classroom.



It could look like:

You make a remark that instigates a strong emotional reaction in a student or group of students.

A student offers a comment that marginalizes a range of people and perspectives.

Someone is wearing a piece of clothing or taking up space in a way that surfaces ideological disagreement

A student is triggered by a material that is part of the course content.

# A few things to keep in mind

- There is often no single “correct” response
- How we address the moment has implications for learning
- Our response should do two things:
  1. Promote learning
  2. Show students that we care about their well being



# What you can do for yourself



## 1. **Be aware of your own reactions**

Pause, take a moment to steady yourself, take a few deep breaths

## 2. **Take a moment to understand the situation**

Did you understand correctly? Possibility that someone misspoke? Or that the meaning was misunderstood? You may need to ask for an explanation for further clarification.

## 3. **Deepen your short term response**

Separate the person from the comment or action

## 4. **Contact your own support network**

# What you can do for students

- 1. Remind students of classroom discussion guidelines**
- 2. Allow students to draw, move around the room, or step out if necessary**
- 3. Give the students a chance to clarify if necessary**

“What do you mean by X?” “I heard you saying Y; is that what you meant to say?” “Do you want to try saying that?” “Let’s talk about why that initial phrasing felt so problematic.”

- 4. Help students find common ground**

“I hear that you both care deeply about achieving X, but you have strongly divergent ideas about how to get there.” “What do these perspectives have in common? How do they differ?”

- 5. Check in with students outside of class**



# Resources

1. <https://bokcenter.harvard.edu/navigating-difficult-moments> (Harvard University)
2. [https://docs.google.com/document/d/1tuMuMVnl7soHLcTNxzCTqcpkun0ASHW\\_WvNuxphyyxA/edit](https://docs.google.com/document/d/1tuMuMVnl7soHLcTNxzCTqcpkun0ASHW_WvNuxphyyxA/edit) (University of Michigan)