

Tricky conversation tips: when you are accused of racism and sexism

- The majority of therapists do not intend to be racist or sexist but we are also affected by our cultural beliefs and accepted stereotypes.
- Even with good intention we can hurt our clients. If a client raises concerns don't bat it away with an 'I'm not racist or sexist'
- Honour your client's experience. Do not minimise your actions with your intentions.
- We want our clients to feel safe in therapy and so a rupture of this kind must be handled very gently and explored with the goal of understanding our client better and also owning our own implicit biases.

Important: people in minority groups often express resentment and exhaustion about explaining racism and sexism to people in the dominant group so it's important that you try hard not to repeat the behaviour. If you ask them to let you know if you do it again it makes them responsible for educating you about their group. Instead: get supervision on this issue. If you become aware of a sexism, gender or racism bias, educate yourself



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Example script for when a client accuses you of racism:

Gina : *What you said was offensive to me. I don't think you would say that to me if I was white.*

Therapist: *Gina, I deeply appreciate that you have shared this with me. It must have taken some courage to do so. I am sorry that I have hurt or offended your feelings or opened up an old wound. I want you to feel safe here so I would never intentionally do that. Please tell me more in your words, what has happened between us. I want to know more so that I can learn more about your experience but also I don't do it again and create a rupture between us.*

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Example script for when a client accuses you of sexism:

Gina : *What you said was offensive to me. I don't think you would say that to me if I was man.*

Therapist: *Gina, thank you so much for sharing that with me. It must have taken some courage to raise that with me. I am sorry that I have hurt or offended your feelings or opened up an old wound. I want you to feel safe here so I would never intentionally do that. Please tell me what has happened between us. I want to know more so that I can learn more about your experience but also do i don't do it again and create a rupture between us.*

