

WHITE FRAGILITY AND THE RULES OF ENGAGEMENT

1. The author presents a set of eleven “cardinal rules” (pp. 123-24) when giving feedback to white people regarding racist assumptions and patterns. For each rule of engagement, provide an example of the rule in action.
2. What assumptions do these rules rest on?
3. DiAngelo presents these rules in a language of critique in order to reveal how they function. Of course the “rules” are rarely explicitly expressed this way. Consider what you hear white people say that communicates “do not give me feedback under any circumstances” etc.? Go through each of the eleven rules and share how you have heard these rules expressed in practice.
4. How would you rewrite these rules from an antiracist framework? (A worksheet for rewriting the rules of engagement can be downloaded from robindiangelo.com/resources.)
5. In your own words, what is problematic about common guidelines for building trust in discussions about racism (e.g., “don’t judge”)? How do these guidelines function? Who are they for? Whose comfort do they protect?
6. The rules of engagement around white fragility have at least three parts: those giving feedback, those receiving feedback, and those witnessing these exchanges. Practice some language for each by preparing your own “sentence starters” such as the silence breakers above. How might you begin to give feedback? How might you respond to feedback given to you? What might you say as you witness an exchange of feedback?