

# "BE PROFESSIONAL:"

wisdom or weapon?

Inclusion minded advice giving

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## PROFESSIONALISM AND WHITE SUPREMACY

Standards of professionalism as they have come to be known in the United States are rooted in White Supremacy. Standards of professionalism historically (and presently) have been decided by characteristics such as White, educated, male, straight, able-bodied, cisgendered, Christian, and socio-economically secure.

## CODESWITCHING

Allows individuals to exist in multiple spaces and it is extremely common. HOWEVER, it is exhausting. Codeswitching may open doors but doesn't keep someone in the room. The act can be mentally harmful when an individual still experiences rejection. AAVE is form of English, just like Standard American English is a form of English. **SAE is not the only form of English.**

## NATURAL HAIR/LOCS

Hair that is worn the way it grows out of someone's head. To protect natural hair, individuals may wear protective styles such as braids or they may choose to wear headwraps to give their hair the time to rest. Locs are also a form of natural hair where length is sometimes the goal. Locs are often worn by men and deemed unprofessional due to the length which communicates that long hair is not okay for male identifying individuals. Locs may also be referred to as "dread locs," but there is nothing "dreadful" about them.

## DRESS CODES

Dress codes often fail to consider body diversity, different ability, gender identity, and just overall comfort. Dress codes are often a way to police bodies to fit a standard that has nothing to do with someone's ability to perform a job. Individuals may need to wear tennis shoes or specific types of clothing for countless reasons. The flyer that advertises what to wear to an interview for men and women also harmful.

## TATTOOS

Tattoos have absolutely NOTHING to do with someone's ability to perform in a job. A high number of individuals with tattoos consider them a form of self-expression and art. Tattooing is also tightly linked to many indigenous cultures, and can be seen as a sign of respect, identity, and status.

## WHAT WE ARE NOT SAYING

**NO:** "American" standards/norms are "bad."  
**YES:** Examining the root of standards/norms of is good.  
**NO:** Everyone should be able to do what they want!  
**YES:** Everyone should be able to be authentically themselves at work

## 8 TIPS

1. Make sure you have a relationship first. A *real* relationship.
2. Check in with a trusted peer about what you observed and how you plan to approach it.
3. When someone asks for your pro advice, resist the urge to give it right away. Tell them you'd like time to think about it.
4. Be careful of the savior complex
5. Remember that inten does **not** equal impact.
6. Examine your own motives...Sometimes they are not pure, and we need to own that.
7. Pause. Is this a "Them" problem or a "you" problem.
8. Stop enforcing inaccessible and inequitable norms of dress, language, and behavior.