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WHAT TO DO IF YOU FEEL HARASSED?

WHAT TO DO IF YOU FEEL HARASSED? TALK IT OVER:

PLEASE TELL SOMEBODY

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Q. Where Can I Go? Should I Really Bother Anyone Else?

If you feel harassed and offended, it nearly always helps to talk it over with some responsible person at MIT. If you "bottle it up," you may begin to blame yourself unreasonably, your work may become less effective; you may oscillate between hating the offender and hating yourself. If you talk it over with some responsible person here, you will probably feel better, you may learn how to handle the problem; MIT may be able to help stop the harassment and prevent its recurrence. There are lots of people to help.

Consider peer resources. They can be especially useful if you are wondering what really happened. ("Did I see it right?") If someone you trust is right there, a fellow student may help a lot in working through whether you should be "tolerating diversity" or protesting offensive behavior. Student resources also include Nightline (253-7840) which operates from 7 p.m. to 7 a.m. on a confidential basis; the Minority Student Group (253-), Association of Women Students (253-), GAMIT (253-5440). In student dorms consider student government officers and judicial committee members. To see if your department presently has an organized group of women and/or minority students, check with the department secretary, or Deans Jeanne Richard and John Turner.

Carefully consider faculty resources. Often your advisor, housemasters, tutors or other friendly instructors will be very helpful. Department Heads are usually exceptionally helpful for graduate students and for undergraduates in a class or lab setting. The UROP, ESG and Concourse offices, course heads, graduate student officers in each department, and lab directors are all appropriate for relevant complaints and concerns.

Various support services will also help you. (Students who feel harassed and upset may wish to check in with one or more offices.) The Dean for Student Affairs staff, the Graduate School Office, Campus Patrol, the nurses, physicians, psychiatrists, psychologists and social workers of the Medical Department, and the religious counsellors are all supportive. If you are in any doubt about where to go, contact one of the Special Assistants to the President. Each handles many

cases of harassment.

If you feel very confused and upset it may help first to talk with some trusted person from home: a parent, spouse, teacher or religious counsellor. We hope in addition you will seek out responsible people at MIT. Ordinarily we can find some way to help you without unduly compromising your privacy or the rights of others. Feel free to come in with an MIT colleague if you wish.

Q. What Is MIT's Attitude With Respect To Harassment Complaints?

Any MIT office you approach has several interests: to help the offended person, to protect the rights of everyone who may be involved, to prevent harassment and in other ways foster the welfare of the MIT community. Ordinarily this will mean either supporting you to take action, or MIT's taking some agreed-on action, but we recognize that you may want just to talk a problem over in confidence and then forget it.

We care very much about your privacy. We also try to hold to conventional standards of proof in protecting the rights of alleged offenders. Sometimes these constraints make it appear difficult to act since in most harassment complaints the offended person wants privacy and since there is usually no conclusive proof of the offense. Indeed the fact that most offended persons fear there is no possible useful action keeps many people from reporting harassment in the first place. Over time however we have found that there is often something that can be done, to stop harassment and to prevent future harassment, that does not infringe on privacy and on the rights of others. We believe therefore that it is always worthwhile to discuss your concern with some responsible person here.

Q. What Will Happen When I Come Into An MIT Office?

Most people begin with an informal visit on a confidential basis. If you then wish to lodge a formal complaint, the person you go to will help you to do so. Student to student complaints within a living group may go formally to a house meeting, a judicial committee, to tutors and housemasters, to the Dean's Office, to the Committee on Discipline, to Campus Patrol or to one of the Special Assistants to the President. Formal student to student complaints outside the living groups could go as relevant also through other channels; your best advisors would be the Dean's Office, the Graduate School Office or a Special Assistant. Formal student-faculty or student-employee complaints go through the line of supervision of the alleged offender.

Formal complaints would nearly always be in writing and would be conveyed to the alleged offender. If after due process the relevant hearing officers feel action is warranted, the responsibility is theirs to decide action and carry it out.

Nearly all harassment complaints are handled within MIT on an informal basis. This approach appears to work most of the time, probably for many reasons. First, a great many concerns arise from different perceptions and different values. Each of us has grown up within only one given gender and race and cultural history; all of us find it extremely difficult at times to understand how responsible people can behave really differently from ourselves. So discussion of different behavior patterns and what they mean irons out many problems. Second, most people will stop offensive behavior, if directly asked to do so, whether or not they altogether understand the offense. Informal warnings nearly always work and are therefore often worth trying. Third, MIT can often take a generic approach to sensitizing people. For example, a department head or housemaster may invite a speaker or a film to help provoke discussion in a given area.

Which approach you may choose may vary with the situation; you can work this out in the office you decide to visit. The major point is this: Harassment is an unacceptable distortion of the MIT environment. If you feel harassed, and upset, we hope you will talk it over with a responsible person here.