

# How to Meet People Without Bias

## Step-by-Step Interaction Guide

### 1 Before meeting:

- **Set an intention:** “My goal is to understand this person, not evaluate or judge them.”
- **Remind yourself of common humanity:** just like you, this person has fears, hopes, and stressors.
- **Notice your “story” in advance:** if you know the context (title, school, org, appearance), name the stereotype you might carry so it’s less likely to dominate your thinking.

### 2 In the first 10-30 seconds:

- **Slow snap judgment:** silently say, “Pause,” before labeling them (smart, flaky, arrogant, etc.).
- **Shift from rating to observing:** instead of “She’s awkward,” try “She’s speaking softly and avoiding eye contact.”
- **Soften your body language:** uncross arms, relax your face, angle your body slightly toward them.

### 3 While you’re talking/listening with curiosity:

- **Ask curious questions:** “How did you get into that?” “What do you enjoy most about it?”
- **Listen to understand, not to reply:** mentally summarize what they said before you answer.
- **Check assumptions out loud:** “I’m not sure I’m reading this right—are you feeling excited, or more overwhelmed?”
- **Look for one thing to appreciate:** their perspective, effort, courage, or experience. Say it if appropriate.
- **Watch your inner commentary:** when a critical thought pops up, add: “And I might not have the full story.”

### 4 When you feel judgment rise:

- **Name it to tame it in your mind:** “I’m feeling really judgmental right now.”
- **Ask three grounding questions:**
  - “What else could be true about why they’re doing this?”
  - “What do I actually know versus what I’m guessing?”
  - “If I’d lived their life, might I make similar choices?”
- **Reframe from person to behavior:** “This behavior doesn’t work for me” instead of “They’re a difficult person.”
- **If needed, focus on boundaries instead of blame:** “What do I need to feel okay here?” rather than “What’s wrong with them?”

### 5 After the interaction:

- **Do a quick review, ask yourself:**
  - “Did I judge quickly?”
  - “Was I genuinely curious?”
  - “What would I like to try differently next time?”
- **Notice patterns:** who triggers your judgments most (certain roles, genders, ages, styles, politics), and consider what that might say about your own values or insecurities.
- **Practice self-compassion:** acknowledge that judging is a human habit you’re working on, not a moral failing.

