

Building a Welcoming Community for Faculty and Staff

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Introduction

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Course Overview

Being a part of the workplace means that you're a part of a community full of people from different backgrounds and life experiences. But we all come together to create our own unique community with a shared history, a set of common values, and a sense of identity. The best thing about being a part of something like this is that every individual member gets to contribute to the wellbeing of the whole community.

The first thing we're going to do together is use our imagination. Imagine a world where a learning experience like this isn't necessary. A world where everyone felt seen and heard. Imagine the goals that could be accomplished.

This course will ask you to consider perspectives that may be new to you and learn new skills or strengthen skills you already have. You will be empowered to be an effective ally for your colleagues, students, friends, and family, and be a more skilled advocate for yourself. You'll also be prepared to help create an institutional culture that is more productive, more innovative, and more engaging for everyone.

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Course Overview

By the end of this course, you will be able to:

- Define key terms such as belonging
- Discuss strategies for improving communication in a multifaceted work environment
- Recognize the role of values, identities and biases that often impact us individually and as a group (and)
- Identify methods for being an ally to our colleagues as well as how to intervene and advocate when concerning incidents occur.

At the end of the course, you'll have a chance to apply what you've learned during a quiz.

So, if you're ready, let's begin.

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Belonging

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Defining Key Terms

Belonging is an employee's sense that their uniqueness is accepted and even treasured by their organization and colleagues.

Belonging goes beyond feeling appreciated and is an accumulation of day-to-day experiences that enables a person to feel safe and bring their full, unique self to work.

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Defining Key Terms

It's important that we're all working with the same definitions—a common language. Let's dig deeper into some important terms to better understand their value and role at work.

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Scenario: Recruiting Dilemma [JEDU-00567_P003]

[1] One important way you can help everyone feel like they belong at work is by speaking up when you see concerning situations. In the following scenario, we'll focus on noticing warning signs. Keep in mind the definition of belonging you just learned as you consider whether the following example may be a problem.

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Scenario: Project Dilemma

Natalie: Looks like our project is coming together. Does anyone have any other ideas? *(group shakes head no)*

Natalie: ok great! Sam are you good with the notes?

Sam: Yup

Katie: *(speaks high pitched and with enthusiasm)* "This is going to be awesome! I think as it gets closer, we just need to decide who will present."

Maria: *(sitting at table nearby gets up and approaches the girls)* I'm happy to be working with all of you. Before going back to school- I was used to presenting a lot. I think I could be a big help.

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Scenario: Project Dilemma

Katie and Natalie (side eye each other) Sam looks at up and then back at Maria and writes notes. he isn't sure whether to side with Katie and Natalie or accept Maria's help. (Sam leans forward about to speak and Natalie cuts him off)

Natalie: Thanks Maria, we got this. It's pretty tech heavy. We could use your help with something else... *(Natalie pauses)* umm maybe with research?

Sam: *(looks down and appears uncertain if he wants to say something).*

Maria: ok...- that works

Sam: well thanks everybody- If anyone has any questions let me know. see you in class.

(everyone gets up to leave)

(Sam looks upset but doesn't say anything.)

Scenario: Project Dilemma

Show shot of Sam at the computer then conversation continues via an animation of a group chat on a computer screen.

Katie: (cringe face emoji) Thanks for saving us from that disaster lol

Natalie: Np it's gonna be way more work to bring Maria up to speed

Katie: I mean if she had trouble changing the font size on her phone how is she going to run a presentation?

Sam. *Picks up phone starts to text*

Natalie: I know right

Sam: puts phone away and continues typing on laptop.



Further Considerations

As we reflect on the scenario, have you been in Sam's shoes? Have there been times where you want to speak up, but you don't know the right way to intervene? Maybe you are concerned about having a different opinion or what others might think. Here are some actions to support a culture in which everyone feels included and a sense of belonging.

You can try things like including people with different views and experiences in projects, sharing credit and decision-making opportunities, or listening openly to a colleague's perspective, especially when it's different from yours.

Remember, extending courtesy and respect to your colleagues, regardless of their role or rank, helps to create an environment where everyone is valued and feels like they belong.



Identity

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Exploring Our Identities

What is identity? What goes into your identity? Let's explore our identities and examine how they shape our experiences at work.

Your identity is what it means to be “you” in a specific context. It can include the categories you associate with, such as your occupation, family status, or political affiliation. It can also involve goals, values, and interests, such as being a caring person or a music lover.

Identity also relates to what we believe and feel, how we connect and relate, how we process information, and who we are and who others perceive us to be.

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Exploring our Identities

In order for faculty and students to feel like they belong the following traits are required:

- **Comfort:** Faculty and students feel comfortable on campus, including having equal opportunities and respected by their colleagues and leaders.
- **Connection:** Faculty feel that they have meaningful interactions with colleagues and students.
- **Contribution:** Faculty feel that they contribute to students' success. There is an understanding of how their strengths help to achieve campus goals.

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Multiple Identities

We often hold multiple identities, depending on the context. In fact, evidence suggests we may define ourselves by as many as seven different identities.

For example, someone may identify as a cautious senior lab technician at work and an adventurous new parent at home. This same person may also feel connected to their identity as a first-generation citizen and person with diabetes in both places.

The perspectives that emerge from these multiple identities are what each team member brings to their work.



Identifying Key Terms

Our sense of self is made up of our different identities, and everyone has more than one identity. Understanding your identities and seeking to understand your colleagues' identities are key to improving communication and culture.

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Intersectionality

Intersectionality, a term originally coined by Dr. Kimberlé Crenshaw, builds on the idea of multiple identities. She notes that it is the overlaps of all of one's identities that shape our experiences and challenges. A person with certain combinations of identities may have very different experiences than someone who shares some, but not all, of those identities.

Intersectional identities influence how you and your colleagues experience the workplace, approach your work, and build relationships. Having an understanding of this concept is helpful in creating a respectful workplace environment.

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Power

While “power” can mean many things, at work, power includes the ability to:

- control or guide others' behavior
- shape the course of events
- define what is socially acceptable behavior and operations
- choose how resources or opportunities are distributed

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Power

Historically, there are groups that have had more power than others, and the effects of those imbalances are still felt today.

Some types of power in higher education workplaces are obvious, such as the kind that comes from being the dean or department head or having managerial duties. Typically, fewer people have this type of power.

Other forms of power are less obvious, such as, for faculty, securing significant research funding or holding a tenured position or, for staff, having more knowledge about a topic or more institutional history.

These are types of power many more individuals may have access to in the workplace. Other examples include being a committee member with decision-making authority or working in an office versus working remotely.

Regardless of your position within the institution, everyone has the opportunity and the responsibility to use the power we have to create a more respectful and unified workplace.



Supporting Our Colleagues

It is important to ensure everyone can contribute regardless of their power in an organization and reduce the impact of bias.

Include people from a variety of different backgrounds, experiences, and views in meetings and when making decisions. Make sure when you do so, you're not asking colleagues to speak on behalf of a particular identity group.

Share institutional knowledge with new team members. Include remote colleagues by varying meeting times and starting conference calls. Request that videos be closed captioned, and transcripts of meetings be shared so all people can review the information.

Broaden who you consider when referring your connections to open positions at the workplace, and who you invite to workplace activities. Consider people who come from underrepresented backgrounds. Outside of work, find opportunities to learn about people and groups different from yours to further educate yourself.



Biases

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An Overview of Biases

Biases are our brain's way to be efficient and create shortcuts for information by quickly categorizing, especially when encountering new people or experiences. It's up to each of us to work and challenge our biases so we ensure the intention of our words and actions are aligned with their impact.

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Addressing Our Biases

Let's look closely at biases, what it means, and how it affects interactions and decision-making with your colleagues and students. You'll learn how to recognize biases in different situations and what you can do to help address it. While institutional and systemic biases exist, we will focus on how we can limit the effect of individual biases.

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What Is Bias?

Through these categorizations, our brains develop biases—which are preferences for or against a thing, person, or group.

Biases can be shaped by our personal experiences, including where we grew up, and what we learned from those around us, like family, friends, community members, and leaders. Biases can also be created in the absence of personal experience or objective information.

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What Is Bias?

According to studies done by the Kirwan Institute for the Study of Race and Ethnicity, our brains process 11 million bits of information every second, but we consciously process only 14 to 60 bits. The vast majority of the work our brains do is unconscious! How do our brains do it?

To help with organizing all this information, our brains create shortcuts. They look for patterns, group information together, and categorize it.

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Prejudice

When we form negative attitudes or perceptions towards individuals and groups based on their identities, these are called prejudices.

For example, a younger employee may be excluded from opportunities to participate in critical projects, because others perceive them as inexperienced based only on their age.

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Stereotypes

Through this same process of categorization based on experience, the media, and input from other people, we assign an overgeneralized set of characteristics, behaviors, and attributes to groups of people based on similar identity traits. This is defined as a **stereotype**. By stereotyping, we assume that every person with a certain identity shares the same qualities.

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Implicit Bias

Implicit bias is an unconscious association with a stereotype, belief about, or attitude toward any individual or identity group. Everyone has implicit biases about various identity groups, and they stem from our tendency to organize society into categories. A relatively common example is the assumption that an older person is not as skilled in the latest technology as a younger person. Another example would be a preference for working with extroverts on important projects, because they are believed to be "better presenters."

Because implicit biases operate on an unconscious level, they can be challenging to identify and recognize. One way to address that challenge is to become more aware of how you think, and how it influences your actions.



Explicit Bias

With **explicit bias**, individuals are aware—or conscious—of their beliefs, prejudices, and attitudes toward other people and identity groups. One example of explicit bias might include avoiding a teammate who has political views that you strongly disagree with, because you don't think you'll be able to get along.

While we all hold biases, explicit biases can be particularly harmful because they can be used to justify unfair or disrespectful treatment.

Hate speech is communication that attacks or uses discriminatory language with reference to a person or a group on the basis of who they are, based on their religion, ethnicity, nationality, race, color, gender, or other identity factor.

Left unchecked, biased behavior may lead to discriminatory or harassing conduct, which our policy and the law prohibits. If you encounter misconduct, please follow the reporting procedures in our policy.



Uncovering Different Types of Bias

Let's dig deeper into different types of implicit bias. There are many types of bias, and not all are outlined in this course. This selection includes examples that are often recognized in a learning and work environment.

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Confirmation Bias

The tendency to interpret and recall information that confirms our preexisting beliefs and values is called confirmation bias.

For example, If we hear someone say that one of our favorite colleagues made an inappropriate comment, we may think “there must be a misunderstanding” because it doesn’t fit with our positive view of that person.

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Conformity Bias

Conformity bias motivates everyone's desire to fit in. We sometimes take cues for appropriate behavior, perspectives, attitudes, and decisions from others instead of from our own independent judgment.

For example, a new employee in the department notices that all of the other women in her unit wear makeup every day. Even though she feels more comfortable not wearing it, she also starts wearing makeup to fit in with her colleagues.

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Affinity Bias

Affinity bias is the preference for people similar to ourselves or people we know and like. It often causes us to want to work or spend time with others who are more like us, rather than people who are different.

For example, the development department is starting a mentorship program for alumni. Many of the mentors list that they would prefer to mentor someone from their degree program or their hometown.

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Anchoring

Anchoring is a bias where we depend too heavily on the first piece[s] of information we receive during decision-making.

For example, your team is hiring a consultant to conduct research for a project. The first consultant that is interviewed proposes that the project will take three months to complete. The second consultant, who has more experience with your industry, proposes a five-month timeline. Because the first consultant's offer sets the tone for the hiring team about what a realistic timeframe is, the second consultant's estimate seems too long by comparison, and that consultant is not selected.

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Halo Effect

The halo effect is the tendency for positive impressions of a person to influence how we think and feel about their character.

For example, a colleague who's graduated from an Ivy League school may immediately be perceived as brilliant and successful, while someone from a public state university may not be perceived in the same way.

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Scenario: Candidates in Question

We all have a role in supporting an welcoming community culture. If you speak up when you see bias in action, it is likely that others will respect your actions and support you. In this scenario, you'll focus on your shared responsibility to take action when you observe bias.

So far, you've reviewed concepts on bias and identified examples of it. Let's observe an example of bias at play when Michael and Tugi are reviewing candidates for the campus newspaper. Think about what you would do in this situation.

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Scenario: Candidates in Question

Michael: [sitting at a table and holding a job resume in his hand]
Wow, what a great person! He reminds me of myself—so motivated, hardworking, persistent... And I think he fits so well with our group.”

Naomi: [sitting at a table and holding job resumes in her hand leans over to look at the resume Michael is holding] I’m not sure he’s the most qualified candidate, though, Michael. This other one has prior experience working on a newspaper.

Michael: Naomi, I've been doing this for almost four years. I've come to learn that the best decisions I've made are the ones where I have gone with my gut. [holds up resume]. Trust me on this one this guy is one of those decisions. So let's take a look at what's next on our to-do list here...

Scenario: Making the Choice

Naomi: Hey Michael, I'm not saying we rule that candidate out but I do have some concerns.

Michael [a little skeptical]: Mmhm

Naomi: Yeah- I just think we need to focus on skills rather than gut feelings. And we should take some time to sort through everything in front of us. We only have a few more interviews and then we can evaluate everyone by email. What do you think?

Michael: (connecting the dots): Sure yeah, I'm not always right.. I guess that makes sense – maybe we can try that.

Naomi: Great, let's take a look at this person. [hands Michael a resume]

Michael: She would be a strong candidate too...

[fade out]



Exploring Bias

We all have some biases, given how our brains work. It may take practice to get comfortable exploring our own biases, but as we learn more about where they come from and what they look like in action, we can begin to limit the effect they have on us individually and as a workplace.

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Understanding Our Impact

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The Impact of Our Words and Actions

Each day you and your colleagues collaborate, and in the midst of it, it's possible that you or others could say or do something that is disrespectful to others.

You might also recall a time when you've been on the receiving end of a comment or action that hurt you or just didn't seem right.

Somebody might brush these words or actions off in the moment, but they have an impact that adds up and can weigh on individuals' well-being over time, as well as on your workplace environment.

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Intent vs. Impact

In this section, we will review statements using the intent versus impact framework and explore alternative language that can enhance a positive work culture.

Have you ever heard "When I look at you, we're the same?" The possible intent could be that you treat everyone the same, which you may perceive to be an effort towards unity.

You can try saying this instead: "Your unique experience and perspective are really valuable to our team."

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Intent vs. Impact

Another example could be asking a coworker “Will you be spending the holiday with your boyfriend or girlfriend?”

It seems like an innocent question. The possible motivation is to try and get to know your colleague better by making friendly conversation about their personal life.

But what’s the impact?

If we are assuming that somebody is in a relationship this implies that being in a relationship is the “norm.”

A better response would be -“How will you be spending the holiday?”



Intent vs. Impact

Imagine you receive an email that says “Our colleague’s retirement is next week. Everyone please contribute \$50 for a party and farewell gift from all of us?.”

The possible intent is by encouraging everyone to contribute a specific amount it allows everyone to participate equally.

However, the impact is some people may not be able to spend money on gifts or social activities because of their financial situation. Expecting a contribution or gift can exclude people from the celebration.

You can try saying this instead: “Our colleague’s retirement is next week. Contribute toward their farewell gift if you wish or find another personal way to wish them well.”



Intent vs. Impact

You're talking to a friend and they tell you “I know exactly what you mean about being excluded. I've experienced my own types of harassment. We all go through it.”

The possible meaning behind the statement could be creating common ground or demonstrating understanding over a similar harmful experience.

The impact is that it centers the conversation on you rather than communicating empathy. Equating your experiences with that of others can communicate that their experience isn't significant.

A supportive response would be to actively listen and thank the person for trusting you with their experience and ask how they would like to be supported.



Intent vs. Impact

One last statement could be "Have you lost weight? Way to go!"

The possible intent could be you've noticed a colleague's efforts to lose weight and want to acknowledge their hard work.

The impact of this comment about a person's body may make them feel uncomfortable, and this assumes their weight loss was desired and intentional. Additionally, this comment may communicate an expected desire to be thin.

It's best to avoid comments about a person's body. Instead, acknowledge their efforts and accomplishments at work: "I am so impressed with your solution—how creative!"

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Respecting Differences

People are always going to be different from who you are. You are an individual. And so where you could find common ground, great. Take that and celebrate it. Where there isn't a lot of common ground, understand the differences there. And I think that's really huge when dealing with anyone, when you're dealing with clients or if you're dealing with friends or even just strangers is that there is common ground and there isn't, but it's about respecting both.

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How to Intervene [JEDU-00567_P034]

You've reviewed some examples of the impact of words when communicating with colleagues and students. Let's explore strategies you can use if you find yourself in an uncomfortable situation.

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How to Intervene

Direct

One approach is to directly address disrespectful or offensive behavior that you observe, if it is safe to do so. This tactic is best when you know the individuals or are in a position of authority or power in the situation.

Distract

A more subtle approach is to distract, interrupt, or de-escalate the interaction by changing the subject or refocusing attention elsewhere. This option can be effective when you don't know the individuals involved or are worried that directly addressing the behavior may make the situation worse for the person being targeted.

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How to Intervene

Delegate

Sometimes, it is best to have someone else get involved. You can delegate by talking to someone else who can help address the situation. This should be someone you trust and could include the leader of the group or your supervisor. This may be a good option if you feel uncomfortable, or if you're unsure how to address the situation.

Delay

Depending on the circumstance, it may be better to delay, or take action later. This option works well if the target of the situation is speaking for themselves, when you've learned about the situation after it happened, or if taking action in the moment may escalate the situation or cause further harm. This could involve checking on the person later to ensure they are OK and offering your support.



Tactless Touch

Let's talk about an example and the different options for intervention. Isabelle and Amya have worked together for a few years and get along well. One day during a meeting Isabelle reaches over to touch Amya's hair and tells her " Oh my, your hair is so fun!". I wish I had hairs like yours. "

Do you think Isabelle's words and actions were disrespectful? What strategies could you use in this situation?

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Scenario: Tactless Touch

Distracting from the conversation is sometimes the right tactic. In this situation, while Isabelle has already acted, you can prevent her from continuing while also not drawing further attention to Amya.

Another option could be getting someone else involved if you feel unsure of how to address the situation on your own. This is an example of delegating. If you're uncomfortable, it's likely that others are, too. Remember to avoid making assumptions and engage neutrally with open questions and/or statements.

Lastly, you can delay reacting in the moment and you can check in on Amya after the meeting. This shows that you care and support her. Consider that this strategy can be used on its own, such as when acting in the moment doesn't seem right, or it can be used along with some of the other strategies.



Self Care

If you've been the target of a hurtful comment, you may want to respond in the moment, or you may want to take some time and think about what—if anything—you wish to do next. Here are a few tactics for you to consider.

Affirm Your Feelings

Whether you feel sad, humiliated, uncertain, or angry, acknowledge and accept your emotional response to what happened and explore why you feel this way. Use this awareness to guide any next steps you may choose to take.

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Self-Care

Directly Respond

If you feel comfortable, you can address the conversation in the moment. One possible tactic is to identify the comment or action and describe its impact on you. So, you might say, “When you said that I heard...” or “When you did that, I felt...”

Take Some Time

Another option is to address the situation later. You may prefer to take some time to think about and practice what you want to say or find a time when you can speak to the person in private. You may decide that you don't want to respond to the person at all—whatever feels right to you.



Self-Care

[1] Seek Support

Talk with empathetic colleagues or friends whose perspective you trust. They can validate your emotions and support you as you reflect on the experience.

Find Your Peace

Try techniques such as meditation, physical exercise, rest, or other practices that help restore your well-being, such as taking pauses from social media, practicing grounding exercises and seeking out trauma-informed care. Explore any employee assistance program benefits that would be helpful for you.



Repairing the Harm

What if you are the person who makes an offensive comment? Most people want to make things right if they've offended a colleague, but sometimes are not sure what to do.

Pick the Right Time to Talk and Listen

Make sure you're ready to offer a sincere apology by reflecting on whether you accept that someone experienced harm, and that you had a role in it. Approach them privately and express that you'd like to apologize. Ask if they're willing to discuss it with you and accept their answer if they're not. If they are, listen to how they feel and avoid becoming defensive; use active listening skills.



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Repairing the Harm

Apologize

An effective apology is focused on the person who was harmed. Acknowledge what happened and take accountability for your actions. It is important to address the impact regardless of your intent. Avoid saying something like, “I’m sorry you were offended.” This avoids taking personal responsibility for the impact of your words or actions.

Try something like, “I said something I thought was funny, but I know now that it was disrespectful to you.” While they may choose to accept your apology and forgive you, you should not expect them to do so.

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Repairing the Harm

Repair & Learn

Acknowledge the impact and harm. Resolve to be more intentional next time and seek to repair the harm. Identify what you can learn from the experience and share with them how you're going to do better if appropriate. One example may be: "Thank you for sharing more of your experience. I understand better now why and how what I said upset impacted you. I'd like to make this right, if I can. What might be helpful for you?"

If you feel too many negative emotions to learn from the experience, like overwhelming guilt or shame, then reach out to a mentor, a professional or confidential employee assistance program, or someone in your community for support to build your own resilience.



Allyship

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Tools for Allyship

In this section, you'll explore allyship and discover ways to be an advocate in the workplace. Your efforts to interact in an honest, constructive, and respectful way will help to support a healthy and inclusive culture for your colleagues and students.

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Exploring Allyship

In an interpersonal setting, there are simple, accessible ways of standing up and being an ally. We all feel that moment when a comment is made said that doesn't necessarily land quite right, and we can work to unpack the meaning behind the meaning. There've been opportunities in my life where I have decided to say simple phrases like, "Well, what did you mean by that?" Or, "Tell me more about your thinking behind that." And I see that as an ally, both to the person who was impacted, but then also to the person who might not have been aware of the impact of their words. And so, I think there's the gift of feedback to that individual, but then also recognizing that the person who is impacted is not standing alone.



Defining Allyship

To better understand allyship, it's important to review some key terms. Let's dig deeper into these concepts and their value at work.

Ally: someone who uses the privilege and power that they may have to support those who do not carry the same privileges or power.

Privilege: doesn't guarantee someone will be more successful, but it can provide the person with more opportunities for success, given the resources they have or the challenges they don't experience. It involves using actions and words to support members of another group.

Advocate: When an ally proactively uses—and is willing to offer up—their power, privilege, and social status to achieve greater unity in the workplace.

Accomplice: someone who supports the target of oppression even when it means taking a risk.



Defining Allyship

Allyship does not involve acting like a hero/heroine, or "saving" another person or group. It's about taking personal action, preparing to support others, and providing that support when and how the person or group desires it. Before acting with or on behalf of a person or group, check in with them first to confirm if a particular action effort would be helpful.

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Being an Ally

Learn

Develop a deeper understanding of the people and communities to which you are allying yourself. Commit to self-learning by reading, watching, and listening to material about past and current challenges. This effort will help you develop greater perspective and empathy. Balance this by also learning about the different accomplishments, celebrations, and contributions of members from diverse groups, which will create greater respect and help diminish stereotypes.

Reflect

Think about what you've learned, both from your self-study as well as from your personal experiences (including when you acted as an effective ally and when you made mistakes).

Notice

Commit to increasing your awareness of who is and isn't in a room or meeting, on a project, or given an opportunity, and advocate for greater representation. Some allies will use their power by giving their place or opportunity to an underrepresented person.



Being an Ally

Amplify

If you notice that a person's voice or ideas aren't being heard, speak up to create space for them to contribute. You can also use your power to echo their ideas and make sure to give them credit.

If you notice that an issue that specifically impacts an underrepresented group(s) is not being raised or heard, speak up and create space for that issue to be heard. You can also use your power to echo their ideas and make sure to give them credit.

Speak Up

If you observe disrespectful behaviors or words, choose how you will intervene. Some options include: directly addressing the behavior, interrupting it in a casual way, engaging someone who has the authority to address the issue, and/or checking on the impacted person afterward.

If a colleague has shared personal information with you in confidence, like a private aspect of their identity, it is important to not share that information with others without their permission.



Active Listening

Active listening is intentionally concentrating on both the words and the message that is being communicated by a speaker. You'll better understand your colleague's perspectives and the speaker will likely feel respected and validated.

Active listening and the practice of checking your understanding of a person's words is often helpful. Active listening can increase productive communication and support positive relationships at work, particularly when you are communicating with someone who has a different point of view than your own.

Focusing on understanding what a colleague is saying—their words, tone, and expressions—instead of listening just to gather information for your own responses.

Processing the main point(s) of the speaker's message.

Checking in and adjusting—try repeating back the key message(s) you received from the speaker when you were actively listening and ask if you interpreted it correctly.

Allowing the speaker to adjust your interpretation, if needed.

and

Responding to the speaker.



Perspective Taking

One way to support effective communication and respect is to practice perspective taking—considering someone else’s point of view, thoughts, and feelings. Perspective taking is not trying to convince someone of your viewpoint but seeking to understand a situation from their experience.

Examples of when perspective taking may be an effective practice are:

- When you have joined an employee resource group as an ally
- When you and fellow team members are working on a project or solving a problem, but have very different approaches
- If someone states that something you said or did was harmful to them

Some ways to apply perspective taking are:

Asking permission to reflect back to the person what you imagine they may have experienced to check your understanding.

Imagining yourself in that person’s place, having a similar experience

Thinking about a time when you may have been in a similar situation or felt the same way

Taking time to learn about cultures, heritages, and lived experiences that are different from your own



Validating

Validating is the act of supporting the value of someone's perspective and the legitimacy of their feelings when they share an experience with you, even though you may not be able to personally relate.

If someone at work trusts you, as an ally, with their experience, providing validation demonstrates care and respect, and promotes a sense of shared understanding.

Validating someone's feelings and experiences can take many forms. It can look like:

- Thanking them for sharing and trusting you with the information
- Asking them what they would like for you to do, if anything, with the information
- Actively listening and asking if they're open to clarifying questions
- Centering your responses on their needs
- Avoiding trying to console by diminishing the harm or explaining the intentions of the other person. This response may minimize their experience.

Ally tip for supervisors/leaders: you may have an obligation to take further action when a person discloses a concern that could be a violation of the law or our policies. Sharing any obligations you have to disclose or report specific information with employees, before they begin describing their concern, will allow them to make an informed choice about what they share with you.



Calling Out

When you observe bias or disrespectful behavior in the workplace, you may feel inclined to “call out” the harmful comment or behavior by addressing it in the moment.

It is important to speak up when you notice bias; “call outs” are a powerful ally practice that we should use carefully and respectfully as we look to build a community of allies.

Examples of when calling out may be an effective practice are:

- When immediately addressing the words or behavior will prevent further harm.
- When a leader observing the conduct directly addresses it, to reinforce behavior expectations while role modeling allyship to others.

If you need to call someone out, consider constructive phrases like:

- “That’s not how we interact” or “Those aren’t our values.”
- “You may be making an assumption that we need to address/think about.”
- “Have you considered how [your words/actions] impact others?”
- “I’m not comfortable with how this conversation is going.”



Calling In

An alternative to “calling out” is “calling in,” a term coined by scholar-activist Dr. Loretta Ross in which an ally addresses the harmful behavior or words in a way that is often done privately.

Examples of when “calling in” may be an effective practice are:

- When the person who acted disrespectfully signals that they want to understand the impact of their words and/or actions
- When the impacted person signals that “calling out” would make the situation worse for them

“Calling in” can be an effective way to understand, learn more, and, in some instances, raise awareness about how biases are influencing an action. Some ways to call in constructively are:

- Asking a person about their intentions when they said or did something
- Asking what input/data/criteria a person used to reach their decision or conclusion
- Asking someone to explore how their preferences, prior experiences, expectations, or assumptions could be influencing their action

Whether calling out or calling in, it’s important that an ally is respectful of the wishes of the person who has been harmed and follows their lead. Check in with them to learn what type of support they want and need and let their input guide you.

Allyship in Practice

As advocates for belonging in the workplace, we each have a part to play in confronting bias and communicating respect. Work to ensure the voices of colleagues are heard, considered, and acknowledged.

[Tip]: When a colleague offers a good idea that isn't being recognized by the group, you reinforce it and give them appropriate credit. For example, "I'd like to return to Blair's strategy for improving our process. I think it's a good idea. Blair—would you like to explain further?"

As an ally, commit time to learn about your colleagues' communities. It's important to take responsibility for your own learning and not rely on others sharing their experience as your sole source of education.

[Tip]: As someone who is not a member of the Asian American Pacific Islander (AAPI) community, you're interested in understanding the nuance of different AAPI experiences in the US. You decide to read several books about the unique historic and current experiences of AAPI people in the US and ask your colleague Maja, who is part of the community, if there are any resources she would recommend as well.



Allyship in Practice

When you observe bias and other harmful behavior, act on behalf of your colleague or support your colleague in advocating for themselves.

[Tip]: Over lunch, coworkers mention a colleague who is a member of the Algonquin tribe. Someone says “Oh, do you think she knows where I could get a tipi?” You reply: “Thinking that she would know about tipis sounds like an assumption, because she belongs to the Algonquin tribe—and tipis are not part of that tribe’s cultural tradition. So, I don't think it would be a good idea to ask her about that.”

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Scenario: Background Noise

Now that we've reviewed important concepts of allyship and learned some effective communication skills, let's focus on deciding how to help in situations when allyship is needed—and how to effectively and respectfully intervene when you see someone being excluded or disrespected.

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Scenario: Background Noise

Viv: Ok, are we ready? Everyone online?

Viv: Alright, I'm going to unmute our end now.

Charles: Hi, guys. I'm sorry, that's my dog Mr. Rundel. He's stuck here behind the, uh...

Viv: Charles, put him on the screen! I'm a huge Mr. Rundel fan.

Charles: Sorry about that, everyone. I'm going to mute myself and get this under control.

Charles: Mr. Rundel!

Viv: I don't think he realizes he's not muted. Charles, you're not muted! Charles! ...

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Scenario: Background Noise

Jo: [over chat] This probably isn't great for your sensory processing thing, huh?

Dominic: [over chat] Yeah, not...great. What am I gonna do, though?

Charles: Ok sorry we should be good now. I'm going to try and start the presentation. Give me a second. Wait, this is saying I'm not the host? Is Sam the host?

Viv: Sam, can you share your screen, please? Sam? Are you there? Why isn't she coming online?

Viv: [over the phone] Sure. No. Ok, but wasn't that Lisa's department's responsibility? Right. When? T

[Computer notifications continue. Dominic puts their fingers to their temples to try and collect themselves.]

Charles: Can you all hear me? Mr. Rundel, can you hear me?

Viv: That cannot be true.

Charles: No one can hear me. Hey team, it looks like Dave's in the waiting room. Can someone bring him on to the call?

Viv: Ok, yeah, just a second.

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Conclusion

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Summary and Implications

We've explored the importance of bringing together a variety perspectives and identities. We have also learned how individuals, teams, and work environments can succeed when everyone feels appreciated, not just for what they bring to their work, but also for who they are. We reviewed the role of values, identities and biases that often impact us individually and as a group. We explored allyship and the different ways we can intervene. It is important to remember we each have an active part to play in advocating for a culture of respect. When we all take action, intentionally and consistently, we can build an environment where everyone feels that they belong.

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