



Leader Kaleidoscope for Multicultural Supervisors: Supporting Our Teams

Highlights & Key Concepts

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Summary Ideas:

Cultivate an awareness of implicit bias and its impacts on BIPOC/multicultural providers you supervise.

- Implicit bias occurs when our understanding, actions, and decisions are affected in an unconscious manner by attitudes or stereotypes about certain groups.
- Implicit bias often arises as a result of trying to find patterns and trying to navigate our complicated world. Culture, media, and upbringing can also contribute to the development of these stereotypes and attitudes.
- Although combating implicit bias is a challenge, research can reveal potential interventions and provide hope that the level of implicit bias in the US is decreasing.

Understand how power dynamics and privilege can affect the relationship between the supervisor and the supervisee.

- Power is the ability to influence and make decisions that impact others.
- Privilege consists of the advantages and benefits that individuals receive because of their membership in a particular social group(s).
- Privilege operates on personal, interpersonal, cultural, and institutional levels.
- People in dominant groups are frequently unaware of their own privilege.

Allyship as a supervisor starts with modeling values.

- An ally is a person whose commitment to dismantling oppression is reflected in a willingness to promote acceptance, inclusivity, and belongingness in the workplace.
- The practice of allyship combined with coalition work furthers social justice efforts to promote equality, equity, respect, and the assurance of rights within and between communities and social groups.

Questions & Responses:

Q1 *What do you know now that you wish you knew when you first began supervising others?*

A1

What I wish I knew then that I know now is—and I hope to share this with a lot of folks—is this realization that I am good enough, and that we have the capacity to always do better, and be better, and the opportunity to inspire others to be their best selves. As a person of color and a member of several marginalized communities - being transgender and an immigrant - my self-doubt has been a barrier. I believe that it's stifled me from seeing my potential. I wish I knew back then what imposter syndrome was—the belief that I was not good enough to fit the role.

Q2 *What are some of the biggest misconceptions about or stumbling blocks to supporting diversity and multicultural providers in the workplace?*

A2 One of the biggest misconceptions about supporting diversity in the workplace is that the responsibility should fall on marginalized individuals or groups, or that it's up to leadership to make change happen. It is in fact the responsibility of all of us to seek acceptance, inclusivity, and belongingness in the workplace. I believe that we often see the oppressed groups or individuals be responsible for teaching us—and we can. But again, it's a shared responsibility.

Q3 *How can supervisors best support diverse and multicultural staff and teams in our field? What skills or perspective do we need to do this well?*

A3 Number one, take care of your staff and team the same way, if not better, than you would like to be taken care of. Believe in what you are hoping to accomplish as a beloved and respected leader. But beyond that, as a role model and peer and equal, if what you're doing begins to feel like a burden, I say, Stop, hard stop. Everyone is going to feel that burden, and it will hurt the group sooner or later. Lastly and simply give love, get love, give respect, receive respect, is the universal theme.

Q4 *How can a supervisor give negative feedback when there is a race-based power differential?*

A4 Give respect, receive respect! Focus on it from an objective lens, in a tangible, measurable way, with evaluation tools. Now, be mindful that the objective toolkits or measures of evaluation might be too objective, that they may not have room for cultural nuances. Also, I believe in gut feelings—if it doesn't feel right, it's very possible the toolkit may be problematic. So, you may want to investigate further and see if it's a healthy measure or evaluation tool, because it's very possible that it was developed by the people who are in a position of power and privilege.

Q5 *Are oppressed groups able to change their position?*

A5 Yes, oppressed groups (also called target groups) have the power to change the dynamics. There needs to be consideration of history, social, political, religious influences, and community. As a community of providers and professions, we have the power to empower others.

Q6 *How can supervisors best support team members who experience the disproportionate harms of organizational policies and/or bias from colleagues? What if the supervisor doesn't have the power themselves to make changes within the oppressive structures we work within?*

A6 We are first and foremost fellow human beings. People who experience oppression or any type of "ism" know when another person means well. I think it would go such a long way for that person to reach out genuinely and offer a source of support, even if that means only active listening - perhaps a shoulder to lean on, and if it means a shoulder to cry on, why

not? It's about normalizing human emotions, whether we're mad, sad, glad, those are all normal. I think that's a good start. I think we can absolutely start with just humanizing our relationships. Yes, we have a power dynamic structure. Perhaps the change may not happen immediately, but I think if we start with that, hopefully that will ignite inspiration to influence other changes that can happen, either from the bottom up or perhaps influence somebody from the top down.

Resources:

- DiAngelo, Robin. [Antiracist checklist](#).
- Ruhl, Charlotte. [Implicit or Unconscious Bias](#). *Simply Psychology*, published July 1, 2020.

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