

2023 - WORK WELL 365

EMBRACING AUTHENTICITY

A Guide to Authenticity and Cultural Awareness at Work



New England (HHS Region 1)

MHTTC

Mental Health Technology Transfer Center Network
Funded by Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration

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The opinions expressed herein are those of Ashley Stewart PhD, MSSW, LSW and Ronitia Hodges, MPA, PMP and do not reflect the official position of the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS), SAMHSA. No official support or endorsement of DHHS or SAMHSA for the opinions described in this document is intended or should be inferred.

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ABOUT THIS WORKBOOK

This workbook is intended to be used as a guide for deeper levels of processing and to support healthier conversations in the workplace around identity and wellness. This resource can be used as a tool to address the unique experiences of work-related stress compounded with being a person of color and also as a resource for folks seeking to be more accountable for reducing harm and creating a more equitable work environment

While it is essential to support employees experiencing systemic marginalization in the workplace, it is most important that marginalization stop occurring, and there instead be organizational change. Therefore this workbook strives to provide organizational resources to reduce harm and move toward accountability.



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WHY THIS WORKBOOK

This workbook is the result of a dedicated effort to address the critical intersection of workplace well-being, racial equity, and inclusion. In early 2022, interviews were conducted with individuals across New England, seeking to gain deeper insights into how workplaces navigated the complex landscape of well-being in the context of issues related to racism on multiple levels—individual, organizational, and societal. The valuable insights gathered from these conversations have been carefully distilled into the content you will find within these pages.

Acknowledging Our Contributors

We extend our heartfelt gratitude to the individuals who generously shared their experiences and perspectives during the interview process. Their openness and willingness to engage in thoughtful discussions have enriched this workbook and provided a foundation for meaningful change. Through their insights, we've gained a more profound understanding of the challenges faced by employees of color in the mental health field and the opportunities for growth and transformation.

THANK YOU!



GUIDANCE FOR CREATING POSITIVE CHANGE

This resource was meticulously crafted to serve as a guiding light for individuals and employers within the mental health field who are committed to fostering well-being and supporting employees of color. By drawing from the real experiences shared during those interviews, this workbook offers practical tools, actionable strategies, and thought-provoking exercises to address the complexities of well-being, identity, authenticity, inclusion, and equity within the workplace.

We recognize the importance of equipping organizations and individuals with the insights needed to create positive change. By using this workbook, employers and employees can engage with the content with a sense of purpose and commitment, working towards creating workplaces that prioritize the holistic well-being of all individuals, particularly those from communities of color.





USING THIS WORKBOOK

This comprehensive guide is designed to support you in cultivating authenticity, promoting inclusion, and prioritizing wellness in the workplace. Whether you're an organizational leader, a colleague, or an individual who has experienced marginalization, this workbook is intended to provide you with practical insights, exercises, and resources to make meaningful progress.

Starting with Intention: Reflection Exercise

Begin your journey with a reflection exercise that encourages you to explore your authentic self, values, and experiences. This initial step sets the tone for your engagement with the content in this guide. Deliberately considering your own perspectives and intentions is crucial, as authenticity, inclusion, and wellness require thoughtful introspection.

Intentional Prompts: A Deliberate Approach

Throughout this guide, you'll encounter numerous prompts and exercises intentionally designed to promote reflection, self-awareness, and actionable steps. We understand that fostering authenticity, addressing bias, and prioritizing wellness require intentional effort and focus. These prompts are here to guide you on your path towards personal growth and organizational change.



OUTCOMES & OPTIMAL USE

What to Expect: Intended Outcomes

By engaging with this guide as intended, you can expect to:

- **Enhance Self-Awareness:** Reflect on your values, biases, and areas for growth, laying the foundation for personal and professional development.
- **Cultivate Inclusive Practices:** Develop strategies to challenge microaggressions, foster allyship, and contribute to a more equitable workplace culture.
- **Prioritize Wellness:** Create a personalized wellness plan and adopt strategies that support your holistic well-being.
- **Contribute to Organizational Change:** Use this guide in tandem with others involved in organizational change efforts to drive meaningful shifts in practices and culture.

Optimal Use: Engage with Purpose

We invite you to use this guide intentionally and purposefully, recognizing that creating an authentic, inclusive, and wellness-centered workplace is an ongoing journey. It's particularly beneficial to engage with this guide in concert with colleagues who are also committed to organizational change initiatives. Together, you can amplify your impact and drive positive shifts in your workplace's practices and culture.



ENHANCING ORGANIZATIONAL EFFORTS

This guide is a valuable resource to enhance efforts aimed at changing organizational practices and culture. It aligns with initiatives focused on diversity, equity, and inclusion, as well as those emphasizing employee well-being. By incorporating the insights and strategies provided here, you can contribute to a workplace that values authenticity, promotes inclusivity, and prioritizes the holistic wellness of all individuals.

Embrace this workbook with intention, use the prompts as catalysts for reflection and action, and embark on a transformative journey towards creating a workplace that truly celebrates the diverse strengths and well-being of everyone involved.

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**"Effectively,
change is almost
impossible without
industry-wide
collaboration,
cooperation, and
consensus."**

-

Simon Mainwaring

THE CHALLENGE

ENGAGING THE WORK

The work of supporting people of color in the workplace is not just the work of one person or one group, it is the collective work of the organization.

The road is long and winding. There will be potholes and pitfalls, but you must stay the course to effectively change the culture and create an environment that supports employee well-being and authenticity.

What is one thing you can do daily to create a culture of inclusion?



NOTES:

A large, solid brown rectangular area intended for taking notes.



01

AUTHENTICITY IN THE WORKPLACE

Authenticity, or being true to oneself, has become increasingly important in the modern workplace. In today's world, where employees are encouraged to bring their whole selves to work and collaborate with colleagues from diverse backgrounds, authenticity has emerged as a crucial trait for success. When individuals are authentic, they are more likely to build trusting relationships with their colleagues, communicate effectively, and contribute to a positive work culture. In contrast, employees who must hide their true selves or conform to workplace norms may experience stress and burnout, leading to lower productivity and job satisfaction. Therefore, authenticity is important for individual well-being, creating a positive work environment, and achieving organizational success.

SECTION 01

CULTIVATING AUTHENTICITY IN THE WORKPLACE



Understanding Authenticity: What Does It Mean to Be Authentic?

Authenticity is the state of being true to oneself, aligning your actions, behaviors, and values with your genuine self. In the workplace, authenticity goes beyond professional roles and expectations, allowing individuals to bring their whole selves to their jobs. It involves embracing your strengths, acknowledging your limitations, and embracing your unique qualities without fear of judgment or reprisal.



Benefits of Authenticity: How It Impacts Individuals and Teams

When individuals feel empowered to be authentic in the workplace, it contributes to a more positive and productive environment. Authenticity fosters genuine connections among team members, encourages open communication, and promotes creativity and innovation. Teams that value authenticity experience increased trust, improved collaboration, and a sense of belonging that drives higher levels of job satisfaction and engagement.



Leadership's Role: Fostering an Environment of Authenticity

Organizational leaders play a pivotal role in creating a culture that encourages authenticity. Leaders who lead by example, openly share their experiences, and create space for vulnerability set the tone for authenticity within their teams. They prioritize active listening, recognize and celebrate diverse perspectives, and ensure that employees feel valued for their unique contributions.

EXERCISES

CULTIVATING AUTHENTICITY IN THE WORKPLACE



Exercises for Leaders: Encouraging Authenticity Among Team Members

1. **Leading with Vulnerability:** Share a personal experience that highlights a challenge you faced and how you overcame it. Encourage your team members to share their stories during team meetings.
2. **Strengths Spotlight:** Have team members identify and share their strengths. Create opportunities for them to apply these strengths in their daily tasks and projects.
3. **Feedback and Recognition:** Provide regular feedback that acknowledges both accomplishments and areas for growth. Acknowledge and appreciate employees for their authenticity and contributions.



Personal Reflection: Exploring Your Authentic Self

Take some time to reflect on the following questions:

- What are your core values, and how do they align with your current role?
- How comfortable do you feel being your authentic self at work?
- Are there any aspects of yourself that you hold back in the workplace? Why?
- What steps can you take to bring more of your authentic self to your job?



REMINDER


NOTES:

Remember, embracing authenticity requires ongoing self-awareness and a commitment to creating an environment where all team members feel safe to express themselves authentically. As you cultivate authenticity in yourself and others, you contribute to a workplace that celebrates diversity, fosters innovation, and promotes overall well-being.

QUESTION TO CONSIDER


Question 1

How can organizations foster an environment of authenticity in the workplace, where employees feel comfortable expressing their true selves without fear of judgment or repercussion?



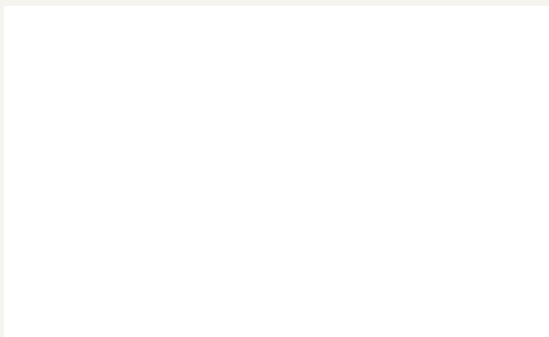
Question 2

What strategies can leaders employ to promote authenticity among team members, encouraging them to bring their genuine perspectives and ideas to the table?



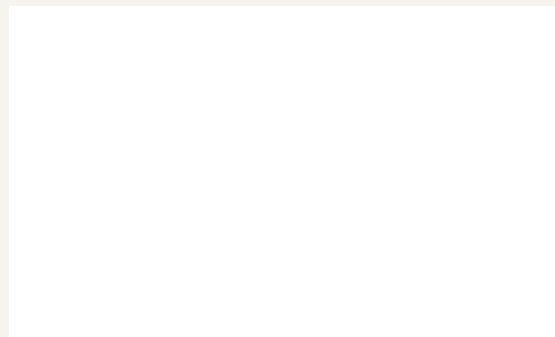
Question 3

In what ways does an authentic workplace culture positively impact employee engagement, job satisfaction, and overall organizational performance?



Question 4

What potential challenges or barriers may hinder the cultivation of authenticity in the workplace, and how can organizations address or overcome them?



DEFINING IMPORTANT TERMS

Being your authentic self in the workplace is important to reduce the need for code-switching, imposter syndrome, and stereotype threat. Being able to talk about these experiences is also important.

Code-switching is "adjusting one's style of speech, appearance, behavior, and expression in ways that will optimize the comfort of others in exchange for fair treatment, quality service, and employment opportunities." (McCluney et al., 2019). Code-switching allows people to navigate the workplace safely*; however, it can also be consequential to people presenting themselves authentically, leading to the exertion of more emotional effort and stress (Johnson, D.G., Mattan, B.D., Flores, N. et al., 2021).

Stereotype threat is defined as a "situation in which there is a negative stereotype about a person's group, and he or she is concerned about being judged or treated negatively on the basis of this stereotype." (Spencer, S. J., Logel, C., & Davies, P. G. 2016).

Some individuals also have **hidden identities**. "Many individuals with invisible stigmatized social identities consciously and deliberately decide not to reveal them in organizational settings context." (DeJordy, R., 2008).

Imposter syndrome is defined as "a pattern of behavior wherein people (even those with adequate external evidence of success) doubt their abilities and have a persistent fear of being exposed as a fraud." (Mullangi S, Jagsi R, 2019). Imposture syndrome mustn't be used to describe doubt that people, particularly people with marginalized identities, experience as a result of a not-yet-inclusive workplace. (Tulshyan, R., & Burey, A.,2021).

My Strengths are...

Please use this space to write out your personal strengths.

My Team is...

Please use this space to write out the unique strengths of your team members.

THE IMPORTANCE OF AUTHENTICITY

Do you ever feel like you spend a lot of energy thinking about and adjusting who you are at work? This might look like changing your voice's natural tone, adjusting your body's posturing, or worrying about how people see or hear you. This can happen when people feel that they can not be their culturally authentic selves in the workplace.

“

Being authentic improves productivity, increases performance and success, and allows employees to exert less energy and time censoring or hiding themselves. Indeed, employees often linked these themes: Spending less time and energy on self-monitoring freed up more time and energy for focusing on the task at hand.”

-Vanessa Buote, PhD

”

“

“If an environment feels threatening, we’ll tend to conform in order to achieve a sense of protection and safety... Those leaders who are willing to take this on will benefit from more innovative conversations, organizational learning, and employees feeling confident and engaged because they’re bringing their true selves into the workplace.”

-Patricia Faison Hewlin

”

“

“Authenticity creates a work culture where people feel more in tune and connected to their work community and loyal to their organization and its purpose, which helps attract and retain talented people to do their best work. Employees experience being themselves. They don’t have to hide or cover up the differences that make them unique. Differences and diversity are welcome. -Dede Henley

”

”

WHAT IS CULTURAL AUTHENTICITY IN THE WORKPLACE?



Ability to demonstrate your cultural identity.



Ability to allow your cultural identity to inform the work.



Opportunities for advancement that do not require forced assimilation.



Not needing to conform or code switch for safety in the workplace.

What Does Cultural Authenticity Look Like for You?

A large, empty white rectangular box intended for a user to write their response to the question above.



“And I'm authentically myself. I don't switch up or change up for anybody, and that's what allows me to be able to do my job. Because when kids come in and see me, they see my swag, they see my flow, they feel it, they connect. We connect with each other. And that's a big part of what we do here because we want everybody to show up and be their authentic selves. And my job allows me to do that and that helps me with my wellness.”

WHAT ARE WHITE DOMINANT CULTURAL NORMS?

White dominant cultural norms are the day-to-day practices that align most closely to White culture and the social construction of whiteness (things that are associated with and deemed most normal and most ideal by standards created through perpetual systemic oppression)(Stewart, A. 2019).

The blue square represents the features of white supremacy culture as defined by Tema Okun [whitesupremacyculture.com].

- Fear
- One Right Way
- Either/Or &The Binary
- Denial and Defensiveness
- Urgency
- Individualism
- Fear of Conflict
- Worship of Written Word
- Progress is More
- Right to Comfort

ADDRESSING WHITE DOMINANT CULTURAL NORMS

By addressing white dominant cultural norms in the workplace, we can reduce fear of doing things outside the norm. We can challenge the notion that there is one right way to do something and break down the denial and defensiveness. We can do this by pushing back on the idea that productive conflict and challenges are not a healthy part of the workplace. Instead, we encourage healthy and critical discourse, even if it evokes a temporary discomfort as the culture changes.



By confronting the White dominant culture, we move strategically instead of urgently without direction to ensure the urgent changes are sustainable. We can and should ensure all people are included instead of focusing on individuals. We can create more space for lived and living experiences and sharing narratives beyond written word and established norms. We will appreciate that productivity isn't just about getting more things done on a day-to-day basis; it's also about making change happen, change that reduces harm and creates an equitable space for all people. (Stewart, A. 2022)

ASSESSING WORKPLACE NORMS

What are the norms of your work environment?

Do these norms feel aligned with your cultural values or representative of who you are?

IDENTITY AND MENTAL HEALTH

02

Creating workplace environments that support identity-based stress response is becoming increasingly important in today's diverse and multicultural workplaces. Identity-based stress response refers to the physiological and psychological reactions that individuals experience when their identity is threatened or marginalized. This can include experiences of discrimination, microaggressions, and exclusion, which can lead to significant negative impacts on an individual's well-being, productivity, and job satisfaction. However, by creating a workplace culture that is inclusive, equitable, and diverse, organizations can mitigate the effects of identity-based stress response and support the well-being of their employees. This can include implementing policies and practices that address discrimination, providing training on cultural competence and sensitivity, and fostering a workplace culture that values diversity and promotes inclusion. By prioritizing the well-being of all employees and creating a supportive workplace environment, organizations can improve employee engagement, retention, and ultimately, their bottom line.



SECTION 02

NAVIGATING IDENTITY AND MENTAL HEALTH



Embracing Diversity: Recognizing the Importance of Identity

Identity encompasses a complex interplay of factors, including but not limited to race, gender, sexual orientation, religion, and socioeconomic background. Embracing diversity means acknowledging and respecting these various dimensions of identity within the workplace. A diverse workforce brings together a range of perspectives and experiences, fostering creativity and driving organizational success.



Identity and Mental Health: Intersections and Impacts

Identity can significantly impact an individual's mental health. Struggles related to authenticity, discrimination, or marginalization can lead to stress, anxiety, and other mental health challenges. It's essential for both individuals and organizations to understand the potential intersections between identity and mental health and work towards creating an environment that supports well-being.



Creating a Safe Space: Encouraging Open Conversations About Identity

Organizations can create safe spaces where employees feel comfortable discussing their identities and experiences. Encouraging open conversations about identity can promote understanding, empathy, and a sense of belonging. Leaders can facilitate workshops or forums that address identity-related topics and provide resources for education and growth.

NOTES:

Type Your Answer Here

EXERCISES

NAVIGATING IDENTITY AND MENTAL HEALTH



Building Resilience: Strategies for Navigating Identity-Related Challenges

- 1. Cultivating Self-Awareness:** Encourage individuals to reflect on their identities, strengths, and areas of growth. Self-awareness can help them navigate challenges and leverage their unique qualities.
- 2. Seeking Support:** Encourage employees to seek out mentors or allies who can provide guidance and support. Peer relationships can be invaluable in navigating identity-related challenges.
- 3. Mindfulness and Stress Management:** Promote mindfulness techniques and stress management practices that help individuals cope with identity-related stressors.
- 4. Affinity Groups:** Establish employee resource groups or affinity groups that provide a space for individuals to connect with colleagues who share similar identities.



Self-Care for Identity Exploration: Techniques for Maintaining Mental Wellness

- 1. Regular Self-Check-Ins:** Take time to assess your mental and emotional well-being. Acknowledge any areas of concern and consider seeking professional help if needed.
- 2. Boundary Setting:** Establish clear boundaries between work and personal life to prevent burnout and maintain a healthy work-life balance.
- 3. Mindful Practices:** Engage in mindfulness activities such as meditation, deep breathing exercises, or journaling to center yourself and manage stress.
- 4. Positive Affirmations:** Practice self-compassion and use positive affirmations to boost self-esteem and counteract negative self-talk.

Navigating the complex terrain of identity and mental health requires a collective effort. By fostering a culture of inclusivity, providing resources for education and support, and promoting self-care practices, organizations can create an environment where individuals feel valued, supported, and empowered to navigate their unique identities while maintaining their mental well-being.

 **Try out one of the above-listed exercises!**

THE STRESS RESPONSE

AND HOW IT CAN AFFECT YOU

The stress response is the emergency reaction of the body that keeps you safe in emergencies. These can be physical and/or mental responses to a perceived threat. Responses to the perceived threat can show up: Physically, emotionally, or behaviorally.



01

PERCEPTION OF THREAT

When an individual perceives a potential threat or danger, such as encountering a predator or facing a stressful situation, the brain's amygdala receives sensory input and quickly assesses the situation as a potential threat.

02

ACTIVATION OF STRESS RESPONSE

The amygdala triggers the release of stress hormones, including adrenaline and cortisol, into the bloodstream. These hormones prepare the body for action by increasing heart rate, blood pressure, and respiration rate.

03

PHYSIOLOGICAL CHANGES

As stress hormones surge through the body, various physiological changes occur. Blood flow is redirected from the digestive and immune systems to the muscles, allowing for quick physical exertion. Pupils dilate to enhance visual perception, and the senses become heightened.

04

FIGHT OR FLIGHT RESPONSE

In this stage, the individual decides between two primary responses: fighting or fleeing. If the person perceives that confronting the threat is the best course of action, they may choose to fight. On the other hand, if they believe that escape is the most appropriate response, they may choose to flee.

EFFECTS OF THE STRESS RESPONSE

Chronic stress and its effects on the stress response have been linked to a range of health problems, including cardiovascular diseases, immune system dysregulation, digestive issues, and a higher risk of developing certain chronic conditions.

It is important to note that the effects of the stress response can vary from person to person, and individuals may respond differently to stress depending on their resilience, coping mechanisms, and overall health. Managing and mitigating the effects of stress is crucial for maintaining physical and mental well-being.

PHYSICAL

- Low Energy
- Insomnia
- Weight Loss
- Muscle aches
- Headache
- Dizziness
- Sweating
- Nausea
- Neck Pain
- Dry Throat
- Chest Pain
- Stomach Cramps
- Choking Feeling
- Increased Blood Pressure
- Light Headed
- Increased Urination
- Numbness in Hands or Feet

EMOTIONAL

- Restlessness
- Mood Swings
- Depression
- Mood Swings
- Hopelessness
- Intense Thinking
- Forgetfulness
- Anger
- Sensitivity
- Defensiveness
- Rigidity
- Anxiety
- Worthlessness
- Defensiveness
- Expecting the Worst
- Insecurity
- Nightmares

BEHAVIORAL

- Avoidance
- Sleeping
- Nail biting
- Neglect
- Increased Spending
- Decreased Exercise
- Aggressive
- Less Eating
- Poor Appearance
- Fidgeting
- Increased Drinking & Smoking

LONG TERM EFFECT

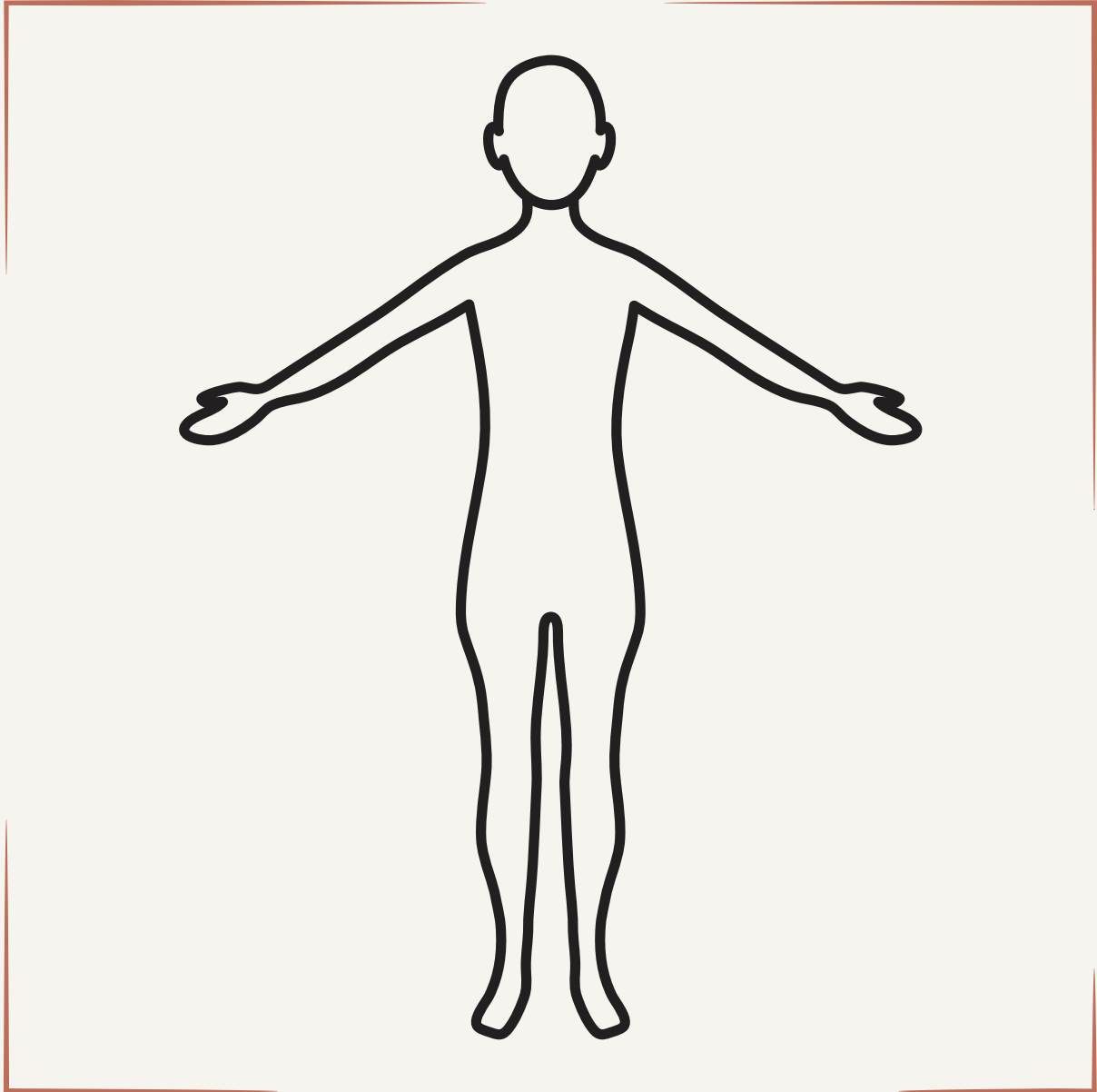
INCREASED RISK FOR:

- Heart Attack
- Stroke
- Memory Loss
- Digestive Issues
- Weight Gain
- Faster Aging

ASSESSMENT

		YES	NO
1	Do you have a strong sense of identity and self-awareness?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2	Do you feel a strong sense of belonging and connection to a particular community or social group at work?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3	Are you comfortable expressing your authentic self in different aspects of your life?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4	Have societal or cultural expectations negatively impacted your personal identity or values?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
5	Have significant life events or transitions influenced your sense of identity and mental well-being?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
6	Do you effectively cope with challenges to your self-esteem and self-confidence?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
7	Have specific aspects of your identity (e.g., race, gender, sexual orientation) significantly impacted your mental health?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
8	Do you feel a sense of purpose or meaning in your life that contributes to your mental well-being?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

EXERCISE: BODY MAPPING STRESS



Using the image above, mark all the places you are currently feeling stress in your body.



DAILY STRESS CHECK-IN

What does stress do to your mood and productivity? Knowing how stress starts, feels, and impacts your functioning is the first step to responding to stress. Sometimes stress can become so commonplace that we can no longer identify it in our bodies and actions. By identifying the stress, we can take intentional pauses to respond and ensure we get the needed support or take the necessary breaks. Remember, self-care is kind because it allows you to continue doing the important work. So, please, remember to self-care.



When I am stressed

Self-Care

When you feel stressed, what do you need? What feels like self-care to you?

Self-care looks different for every person, and our identity plays a role in what self-care is to us. For some of us, it is being in or near water; for some, it is exercising; others may feel best speaking our truth or advocating. We honor how self-care feels for you.



When I am stressed I need



03

— ADDRESSING MICROAGGRESSIONS — AND INSTITUTIONAL BIAS

Bias refers to the conscious or unconscious stereotypes, attitudes, and beliefs that individuals hold about different groups of people, while microaggressions are subtle, actions or statements that have a negative impact on marginalized individuals. These issues can contribute to a unhealthy work environment, reduce employee morale, and lead to significant negative impacts on the well-being and productivity of affected employees. However, by addressing bias and microaggressions in the workplace, organizations can foster a culture of respect, inclusivity, and equity. This can include implementing policies and training programs to address unconscious bias, providing resources to help employees understand and avoid microaggressions, and creating a culture of openness and accountability that encourages employees to speak up when they witness biased or microaggressive behavior. Ultimately, by addressing these issues, organizations can create a more positive work environment that supports the well-being and success of all employees.

SECTION 03

ADDRESSING MICROAGGRESSIONS AND INSTITUTIONAL BIAS



Unpacking Microaggressions: Understanding Their Harmful Effects

Microaggressions are subtle, often unintentional actions or comments that communicate bias or stereotypes towards individuals based on their identity. They can have a significant impact on an individual's sense of belonging and well-being. Recognizing and addressing microaggressions is crucial for creating an inclusive workplace where everyone feels valued and respected.



Recognizing Institutional Bias: How It Manifests in the Workplace

Institutional bias refers to systemic and structural inequalities that can affect hiring practices, promotion opportunities, and overall workplace experiences. Recognizing these biases is essential for dismantling systemic barriers and fostering an equitable work environment.



Bystanders' Role: Strategies for Challenging Microaggressions

Bystanders have the power to intervene and challenge microaggressions. Strategies include:

- 1. Direct Confrontation:** Address the microaggression immediately, calmly expressing why it's inappropriate and how it impacts the target.
- 2. Distraction:** Shift the conversation or redirect attention to a different topic to diffuse the situation, with the intention to address it later.
- 3. Support the Target:** Privately reach out to the individual who experienced the microaggression, offering validation and solidarity.
- 4. Educate:** Explain the issue to the offender, helping them understand the impact of their words or actions.

ADDRESSING MICROAGGRESSIONS AND INSTITUTIONAL BIAS



Fostering Allyship: Supporting Colleagues and Peers

- 1. Active Listening:** Listen attentively when colleagues share their experiences of bias or marginalization. Offer empathy and support without judgment.
- 2. Educate Yourself:** Continuously educate yourself about different identities and experiences to become a more effective ally.
- 3. Amplification:** Give credit to colleagues for their ideas and contributions in meetings, ensuring their voices are heard and acknowledged.
- 4. Advocacy:** Speak up in meetings or discussions when you notice bias or exclusionary behavior, advocating for a more inclusive workplace.



Collective Accountability: Creating a Bias-Free Workplace Culture

- 1. Inclusive Training:** Provide regular diversity and inclusion training for all employees, focusing on unconscious bias, microaggressions, and institutional discrimination.
- 2. Transparent Reporting:** Establish a straightforward process for reporting incidents of bias or discrimination and ensure appropriate consequences for offenders.
- 3. Representation:** Strive for diverse representation in leadership positions and decision-making roles to influence organizational culture and policies.

Addressing microaggressions and institutional bias requires a commitment from all levels of an organization. By fostering bystander intervention, promoting allyship, and actively working toward a bias-free culture, individuals and organizations can create a workplace where everyone feels respected, valued, and empowered to succeed.

NOTES:

WHAT ARE MICROAGGRESSIONS?



Definition 1

A statement, action, or incident regarded as an instance of indirect, subtle, or unintentional discrimination against members of a marginalized group such as a racial or ethnic minority (Sue, et.al, 2007)

Definition 2

Brief, subtle, negative, and invalidating messages, whether intentional or unintentional, are directed on a regular basis to people in minoritized groups based on race/ethnicity, sexual orientation, gender, gender identity, documentation/citizenship status, ability, religion, etc. (Texas A&M, n.d.)

Definition 3

"The chief vehicle for pro-racist behaviors," and as "subtle, stunning, often automatic, and nonverbal exchanges" (Pierce, Carew, Pierce-Gonzalez, & Willis, 1977, p. 65)

Thought Exercise:

What words stand out to you from the definitions provided and from other definitions of microaggressions you have heard?

A large, empty white rectangular box intended for the user to write their response to the thought exercise.

TYPES OF MICROAGGRESSIONS

Microinsult

"Behavioral/verbal remarks or comments that convey rudeness, insensitivity, and demean a person's racial heritage or identity."

Microassault

"Explicit racial derogations characterized primarily by a violent verbal or nonverbal attack meant to hurt the intended victim through name-calling, avoidant behavior or purposeful discriminatory actions."

Microinvalidation

"Verbal comments or behaviors that exclude negating, or nullify the psychological thoughts, feelings, or experiential reality of a person of color."

Sue DW, Capodilupo CM, Torino GC, Bucceri JM, Holder AM, Nadal KL, Esquilin M. Racial microaggressions in everyday life: implications for clinical practice. *Am Psychol.* 2007 May-Jun;62(4):271-86.

Remember, microaggressions are sometimes verbal, behavioral, and environmental. What types of microaggressions do you see in the workplace?

IMPACT OF MICROAGGRESSIONS

Microaggressions are important to address. They are not insignificant nor inconsequential and can have a significant impact on your health.

INCREASED RISK FOR:

- Depression
- Stress
- Trauma
- Heart Conditions
- Anxiety
- Health Conditions

THINGS TO CONSIDER

INTENT VS IMPACT

Intent

WHAT IS INTENT?

Intent is what you have in mind as a goal when you decided to make a statement or perform an action

Impact

WHAT IS IMPACT?

The impact is the result of those words or actions, which also considers the other persons lived experiences

Impact Matters

WHY DOES IMPACT MATTER?

Impact is important in the workplace. The actions and words of people in an organization can determine the experience for others.



INTENT VS IMPACT

RESPONDING

WHAT TO DO WHEN INTENT AND IMPACT DON'T ALIGN.

Taking accountability when your impact is different than your intent involves acknowledging and taking responsibility for the unintended consequences of your actions. Here are some steps you can take:

- 1** Reflect on the situation: Take a moment to reflect on the impact of your actions and the disparities between your intentions and the actual outcome. Acknowledge that despite good intentions, your actions may have caused harm or had unintended consequences.
- 2** Listen and empathize: Be open to feedback from others who were affected by your actions. Listen to their perspectives and empathize with their experiences to better understand the impact from their point of view.
- 3** Take ownership: Accept responsibility for your actions and their consequences. Avoid making excuses or deflecting blame onto external factors. Acknowledge that your intent doesn't negate the impact on others.
- 4** Apologize sincerely: Offer a genuine apology to those who were negatively impacted. Acknowledge the specific harm caused, express remorse, and avoid making excuses in your apology.

INTENT VS IMPACT

RESPONDING

WHAT TO DO WHEN INTENT AND IMPACT DON'T ALIGN.

Taking accountability when your impact is different than your intent involves acknowledging and taking responsibility for the unintended consequences of your actions. Here are some steps you can take:

- 5** Learn and educate: Educate yourself on the issues and factors that led to the unintended impact. This will help you gain insight into the complexities of the situation and avoid similar mistakes in the future.
- 6** Change behavior: Commit to changing your behavior to prevent similar unintended impacts in the future. Be mindful of the potential consequences of your actions and strive to align your intent with your impact.
- 7** Seek guidance: If necessary, seek advice or guidance from others who have expertise in the area where your impact differed from your intent. Learning from those with experience can help you navigate complex situations better.
- 8** Be patient with yourself: Recognize that taking accountability is a process, and it might take time to fully understand and address the situation. Be patient with yourself as you learn and grow from the experience.

ADDRESSING MICROAGGRESSIONS

- ✓ Recognize and understand microaggressions: Educate yourself and others about what microaggressions are and how they can manifest in the workplace. Recognize that microaggressions are often subtle and unintentional, but they can still have a negative impact on individuals or marginalized groups.
- ✓ Encourage open communication: Foster an environment where open and respectful communication is encouraged. Create spaces where individuals feel safe to speak up and share their experiences of microaggressions. This can be done through team discussions, diversity training, or anonymous reporting channels.
- ✓ Respond promptly and appropriately: When a microaggression occurs, address it promptly and directly. Speak to the person responsible for the microaggression privately, if possible, and explain the impact of their words or actions. Focus on educating and fostering understanding rather than blaming or shaming. Encourage them to reflect on their behavior and make amends if necessary.
- ✓ Support and take corrective action: Support the person who experienced the microaggression by offering empathy, validation, and resources if needed. Ensure appropriate measures are taken to prevent future microaggressions, such as implementing diversity and inclusion training, revising policies, or establishing clear guidelines for respectful behavior. Regularly assess the workplace culture to identify and address any systemic issues that may contribute to the occurrence of microaggressions.

How might you address the microaggressions you observe?



04

PRIORITIZING WELLNESS IN THE WORKPLACE

Burnout has become a prevalent issue in the modern workplace, with many individuals experiencing physical, emotional, and mental exhaustion as a result of chronic workplace stress. While burnout was initially considered an individual problem, it is now widely recognized as a consequence of systemic issues within organizations. Despite this recognition, there is a tendency to pathologize individuals who experience burnout, attributing their struggles solely to personal weaknesses or shortcomings. However, it is essential to shift the focus away from individuals and towards addressing the organizational issues that contribute to burnout. By doing so, organizations can create a healthier work environment, improve employee well-being, and ultimately increase productivity and success. Therefore, it is crucial to recognize and address the systemic issues that contribute to burnout rather than pathologizing individuals who experience it.

PRIORITIZING WELLNESS IN THE WORKPLACE



Holistic Wellness: Beyond Physical Health

Wellness encompasses more than just physical health; it includes mental, emotional, social, and spiritual well-being. Recognizing and addressing these dimensions is essential for creating a balanced and thriving work environment.



Creating a Wellness Culture: The Role of Organizational Leaders

Organizational leaders play a vital role in promoting wellness by:

- 1. Setting the Tone:** Demonstrate a commitment to wellness through your actions, policies, and practices.
- 2. Flexible Work Arrangements:** Offer options such as remote work, flexible hours, and wellness days to support work-life integration.
- 3. Promoting Work-Life Balance:** Encourage employees to take breaks, use their vacation time, and disconnect from work outside of working hours.



Work-Life Integration: Balancing Personal and Professional Well-Being

- 1. Prioritization:** Identify your key priorities both at work and in your personal life to make informed decisions and manage your time effectively.
- 2. Boundaries:** Establish clear boundaries between work and personal time. Communicate your availability and limitations to colleagues and supervisors.
- 3. Time Management:** Use tools like calendars, to-do lists, and time-blocking techniques to allocate time for work tasks, self-care, and personal activities.

NOTES:

PRIORITIZING WELLNESS IN THE WORKPLACE



Wellness Initiatives: Practical Steps for Promoting Employee Wellness

- 1. Wellness Programs:** Offer wellness programs that cater to various dimensions of well-being, such as mindfulness sessions, fitness classes, or stress management workshops.
- 2. Health and Safety Measures:** Implement measures to ensure a safe and healthy work environment, including ergonomic workstations, proper ventilation, and mental health resources.
- 3. Recognition and Appreciation:** Acknowledge and celebrate employee achievements and milestones to boost morale and foster a sense of accomplishment.



Personal Wellness Plan: Customizing Strategies for a Balanced Life

- 1. Self-Assessment:** Reflect on each dimension of wellness (physical, mental, emotional, social, spiritual) and identify areas that may need attention.
- 2. Goal Setting:** Set realistic and achievable wellness goals for each dimension. Break them down into actionable steps.
- 3. Regular Check-Ins:** Periodically evaluate your progress, adjust your wellness plan, and celebrate your successes.
- 4. Seeking Support:** Reach out to colleagues, mentors, or wellness professionals for guidance and encouragement.

Prioritizing wellness in the workplace contributes to increased job satisfaction, improved morale, and higher levels of employee engagement. By fostering a culture that values holistic well-being, organizations can create an environment where individuals thrive personally and professionally, leading to long-term success and fulfillment.



What is a change you can implement right away for yourself and/or your team?



EQUITY IN THE WORKPLACE

Common mistakes to be on the lookout for when moving toward equitable workplace:

TREATING EQUITY
AS AN ADDITIVE

RELYING SOLELY
ON CHARASMATIC
LEADERS

QUICK WINS

TOKENIZING
EQUITY

SAVIOR COMPLEX

ONE-DIRECTIONAL
CHANGE

IT IS IMPORTANT THAT WE ARE DILIGENT AND CAREFUL WHEN CREATING CULTURE CHANGE TOWARD A MORE EQUITABLE ENVIRONMENT. IT IS ESSENTIAL TO AVOID EQUITY PITFALLS (SONG, L. & MICHEL, A. , 2022)

CULTURE CHANGE

Being Prepared for Culture Change. Often we think about organizational wellness and equity and inclusion practices idealistically. There is a need to prepare and practice the principles of change to concretize them. Therefore, this workbook is committed to action thinking, so we can be prepared for and actively engage in equity work to improve organizational wellness.



LEADERSHIP COMMITMENT:

The commitment to racial equity and inclusion must begin from the top. Leadership should publicly declare and embed this commitment into its mission and strategic plans.

Exercise: Review the organization's mission statement. How does this mission connect to equity and inclusion? What is your role in ensuring equity and inclusion practices are connected to the organization's mission? Write a brief statement on how you will contribute to these practices daily.



WORKFORCE DIVERSITY:

Actively recruit, retain, and promote a diverse workforce that represents the population served. This may involve partnering with community organizations, schools, or other groups to attract diverse talent.

Exercise: What incentives exist for people with lived and living experiences to work at your organizations? Are lived and living experiences valued, meritoriously prioritized, and compensated adequately at your organization? How can you encourage a deeper appreciation for lived experience in your organization?

CULTURE CHANGE



TRAINING AND EDUCATION:

Provide regular training to staff on racial equity, cultural competency, unconscious bias, and inclusion. This should also be part of the orientation for new employees and increased training with every level of promotion.

Exercise: Who are your partners in helping you develop a critical lens to improve your organizational training? What do you think would be helpful for your peers to be trained in at various levels? Is there an opportunity or a space for employees to make suggestions for training needs? Is everyone in the organization made aware of training opportunities happening across all levels of leadership?



INCLUSIVE POLICIES AND PRACTICES:

Review and revise workplace policies and practices to ensure they are equitable and inclusive. This could include hiring practices, performance evaluations, promotions, and compensation changes.

Exercise: During performance reviews, can you say that you contribute to a culture of inclusion at the organization? Is adding to a culture of inclusion valued in work evaluation? Is a commitment to equity and inclusion and a demonstrative willingness to grow in the area part of the hiring process?



SAFE SPACE FOR DIALOGUE:

Encourage open dialogue about identity and equity. Create safe spaces for these conversations and ensure they are facilitated in a manner that allows all voices to be heard.

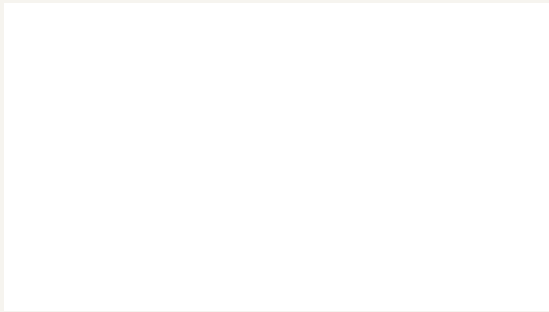
Exercise: What would a productive affinity space look like in the workplace? How might sharing similar experiences contribute to a sense of community? What is an affinity space that you think would be helpful for you as a professional? How could helpful recommendations from affinity spaces be shared with leadership? How can leadership receive recommendations from affinity spaces?

MEASURING PROGRESS

Establish measurable equity and inclusion goals and regularly track and report progress. This could involve tracking the diversity of your workforce, the results of staff surveys on workplace culture, or the impact of specific initiatives.

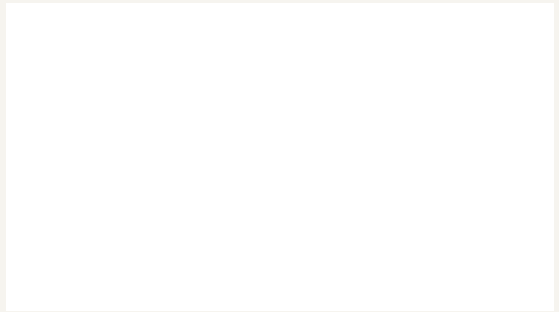
Accountability:

Hold all staff, including leadership, accountable for promoting racial equity and inclusion. This could involve integrating equity and inclusion goals into performance evaluations.



Integration:

Equity and inclusion practices are not additives. Equity and inclusion values should be integral in all parts of the peer-workforce culture.



Representation in Decision-Making:

Ensure diverse representation in decision-making processes and leadership positions within the organization.



Feedback Mechanisms:

Implement feedback mechanisms to understand employee experiences and perceptions about equity and inclusion in the organization.





05

RESOURCES

- Glossary of Key Terms
 - Additional Resources
 - Worksheet 1: Self-Reflection on Authenticity
 - Worksheet 2: Identifying Microaggressions
 - Worksheet 3: Wellness Action Plan
 - Worksheet 4: Bystander Intervention Guide
 - Policy 1: Diversity and Inclusion Policy
 - Policy 2: Reporting and Resolution Procedure
 - Training 1: Unconscious Bias Training
 - Workshop 1: Inclusive Leadership Workshop
-

RESOURCES

These appendices provide supplementary resources, tools, and guidance to enhance your understanding and implementation of the concepts covered in this workbook. Utilize these materials to further your knowledge, engage in self-reflection, and take actionable steps toward creating a more authentic, inclusive, and wellness-centered workplace.

GLOSSARY OF KEY TERMS

AUTHENTICITY

Being true to oneself and aligning actions with one's genuine self.

MICROAGGRESSIONS

Subtle, often unintentional (unconscious as a result of bias) actions or comments that communicate bias or stereotypes.

INSTITUTIONAL BIAS

Systemic and structural inequalities that affect workplace experiences.

ALLYSHIP

Actively supporting and advocating for individuals from marginalized groups.

WELL-BEING

Holistic state of physical, mental, emotional, and social health.



RESOURCES

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES RECOMMENDED READINGS, VIDEOS, AND WEBSITES

Recommended Readings:

1. "Daring Greatly" by Brené Brown
2. "The Power of Habit" by Charles Duhigg
3. "White Fragility" by Robin DiAngelo
4. "The Mindful Leader" by Michael Carroll
5. "My Grandmother's Hands: Racialized Trauma and the Pathway to Mending Our Hearts and Bodies" by Resmaa Menakem

Online Resources:

- Harvard Implicit Bias Test
<https://implicit.harvard.edu/implicit/>
- TED Talk: The Danger of a Single Story -
https://www.ted.com/talks/chimamanda_ngozi_adichie_we_should_all_be_feminists
- Mental Health America -
<https://www.mhanational.org/>



RESOURCES

WORKSHEET 1: SELF-REFLECTION ON AUTHENTICITY

Instructions: Use this worksheet to explore your authentic self and align your values with your actions in the workplace.

1. Core Values: List three to five core values that define who you are as a person.

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

2. Authentic Actions: Reflect on recent actions at work. Did these actions align with your core values? If not, how could you have acted more authentically?

3. Challenges to Authenticity: Identify any challenges or barriers that hinder you from being authentic at work. How can you address or overcome these challenges?

4. Small Steps: List three small steps you can take to bring more authenticity to your work interactions and tasks.

RESOURCES

WORKSHEET 2: IDENTIFYING MICROAGGRESSIONS

Instructions: Use this tool to recognize and understand different types of microaggressions.

1. Type of Microaggression: Choose one of the following categories:

Microassault | Microinsult | Microinvalidation

2. Example: Describe an example of a microaggression you have witnessed or experienced.

3. Impact: Reflect on the impact of the microaggression. How might it have affected the targeted individual?

4. Response: Consider how you could respond to the microaggression if you witnessed it as a bystander. What steps could you take to address it?

RESOURCES

WORKSHEET 3: WELLNESS ACTION PLAN

Instructions: Use this template to create a personalized plan for prioritizing wellness in different dimensions of your life.

Dimension of Wellness: (e.g., Physical, Mental, Emotional, Social, Spiritual)

Goal: (e.g., Improve overall physical health)

Steps:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Measurable Progress:

- Milestone 1: (e.g., Exercise three times a week)
- Milestone 2: (e.g., Meditate for 10 minutes daily)

Obstacles and Solutions:

- Obstacle: (e.g., Lack of time)
- Solution: (e.g., Wake up 30 minutes earlier for exercise)

RESOURCES

WORKSHEET 4: BYSTANDER INTERVENTION GUIDE

Instructions: Use this worksheet to practice intervening in situations involving microaggressions.

1. Scenario: Describe a hypothetical scenario involving a microaggression.

2. Bystander Action:

Direct Confrontation: How could you directly address the situation with the offender?

Distraction: How could you shift the conversation away from the microaggression, with the intention to address it later?

Support the Target: How could you provide support to the individual targeted by the microaggression?

Education: How could you educate the offender about the issue?

3. Personal Reflection:

How do you feel about intervening in such situations?

What challenges or concerns do you have?

RESOURCES

POLICY 1: DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION POLICY

Purpose: This policy outlines our commitment to fostering a diverse and inclusive workplace where all individuals are valued, respected, and empowered to thrive.

Key Principles:

- 1. Embrace Diversity:** We recognize and celebrate the diverse backgrounds, experiences, and perspectives of our employees.
- 2. Equal Opportunity:** We provide equal opportunities for all employees, regardless of their race, gender, age, sexual orientation, or any other characteristic.
- 3. Non-Discrimination:** We prohibit discrimination, harassment, and retaliation in all forms.
- 4. Inclusive Leadership:** We promote inclusive leadership practices that encourage participation, collaboration, and open communication.
- 5. Training and Education:** We provide ongoing diversity and inclusion training to raise awareness and promote understanding among employees.

RESOURCES

POLICY 2: REPORTING AND RESOLUTION PROCEDURE

Purpose: This procedure outlines the steps for reporting and addressing incidents of bias, discrimination, microaggressions, or other inappropriate behavior.

Key Principles:

Reporting Steps:

- 1. Report Incident:** Employees who witness or experience an incident should report it to their immediate supervisor or HR representative.
- 2. Provide Details:** Include details such as date, time, location, individuals involved, and a description of the incident.

Investigation and Resolution:

- 1. Review and Assess:** HR will review the report and assess the situation to determine the appropriate course of action.
- 2. Investigation:** If necessary, HR will conduct a thorough investigation, ensuring confidentiality and fairness.
- 3. Resolution:** HR will take appropriate steps to address the issue, which may include counseling, training, or disciplinary action.

Protection from Retaliation:

We are committed to protecting employees from retaliation for reporting incidents or participating in investigations.

These model policies and procedures provide a framework for promoting diversity, equity, and inclusion while ensuring a fair and respectful workplace. Organizations can customize these policies to align with their values and create a culture that prioritizes the well-being of all employees.

RESOURCES

TRAINING 1: UNCONSCIOUS BIAS TRAINING

Objective: Raise awareness about unconscious biases and their impact on workplace interactions and decision-making.

Key Components:

- 1. Understanding Unconscious Bias:** Exploring the concept of unconscious bias and how it influences perceptions and behaviors.
- 2. Types of Bias:** Identifying different types of biases, such as affinity bias, confirmation bias, and stereotype bias.
- 3. Recognizing Bias:** Learning to recognize instances of unconscious bias in everyday situations.
- 4. Strategies for Mitigation:** Providing techniques for mitigating the effects of unconscious bias in decision-making processes.
- 5. Promoting Inclusivity:** Discussing practical strategies for creating an inclusive work environment that challenges biases.



RESOURCES

WORKSHOP 1: INCLUSIVE LEADERSHIP WORKSHOP

Purpose: This procedure outlines the steps for reporting and addressing incidents of bias, discrimination, microaggressions, or other inappropriate behavior.

Key Principles:

Objective: Equip leaders with the skills and knowledge to create an inclusive team and organizational culture.

Key Components:

- 1. Inclusive Leadership Principles:** Exploring the critical principles of inclusive leadership and their importance in fostering a diverse and collaborative workplace.
- 2. Self-Awareness and Cultural Competence:** Developing self-awareness and understanding of one's biases and privileges.
- 3. Building Inclusive Teams:** Strategies for creating diverse and inclusive teams that value different perspectives and contributions.
- 4. Communication and Collaboration:** Enhancing skills in effective communication, active listening, and promoting open dialogue.
- 5. Allyship and Advocacy:** Encouraging leaders to become allies, advocate for inclusivity, and address bias and discrimination.

These recommended training programs and workshops provide valuable opportunities for individuals and organizations to deepen their understanding of diversity, equity, inclusion, and bias mitigation. By participating in these learning experiences, employees and leaders can develop the skills and knowledge needed to create a more inclusive and supportive workplace environment.

Feel free to print and use these worksheets and templates to engage in meaningful self-reflection, learning, and action as you work towards creating a more inclusive and wellness-focused workplace.



06

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