

INTRO: A thriving workplace culture is inclusive and respectful. This month, the EAO talks about resources to support managers in fostering inclusion in the workplace.

What is inclusion, and why does it matter in the workplace?

UW-Madison's Office of Equity, Inclusion, and Employee Well-being (EIEW) defines inclusion as the "the external conditions (policies, environments, interactions), which are created and cultivated, that result in an individual's sense of belonging. It means being respected and valued as a contributing and engaged member of the team, work group or organization. An inclusive culture is one in which barriers to contribution and negative biases are eliminated, and people are respected and able to give their personal best."

UW-Madison strives to create inclusive working environments on campus. An inclusive workplace:

- Builds a culture where all employees feel valued and respected
- Connects employees to each other and to shared purpose
- Attracts and retains talented employees

What strategies can managers use as they work on creating an inclusive workplace culture?

We can all play a role in creating a more inclusive workplace culture. The following strategies do not represent an exhaustive list, but instead is intended to serve as a helpful starting place.

- **Ensure that employees have fair, equitable access to resources.** Inclusive workplaces eliminate barriers and provide employees with the resources that they need to succeed and thrive. How can we identify changes that we need to make? It is often challenging to see beyond our own perspectives, and we can unintentionally favor people who remind us of ourselves even when we consider ourselves to be fair. To be truly inclusive, we need to look beyond our own perspectives and reflect on the ways that employees access resources at work, including the following questions:
 - Do all employees have easy access to accessible bathrooms that affirm their identities?
 - Do digital tools used in the workplace follow UW-Madison accessibility guidelines?
 - When meeting in-person, have you taken steps to ensure that the space and presentation is accessible to all? This may include using microphones, following digital accessibility guidelines, and providing meeting agendas ahead of time.
 - Accessibility@UW is a centralized resource where you can learn more about UW-Madison accessibility guidelines, tools, and learning opportunities. Learn more at [this link](#).
 - Do all employees have equal access to professional development, feedback, and growth opportunities?
 - Can employees share feedback without fear, regardless of their role within an organization? What opportunities exist for employees to communicate outside of hierarchies and silos?

If the answer to any of these questions is no, your workplace may not be allocating resources in an inclusive way. Employee assistance and many other resources on campus can support you in making changes that promote inclusion at work.

- **Support the use of inclusive language.** The words we use matter. When employees use exclusionary, insensitive, or discriminatory language, they often harm their coworkers and send a message that not everyone is welcome. Conversely, inclusive language demonstrates a commitment to inclusion at work and allows employees to show up as their full selves at work. This might include:
 - Eliminating gender-specific words in favor of gender-neutral terminology (i.e. parent instead of mother/father, spouse instead of husband/wife)
 - Sharing your pronouns and creating opportunities to others to do the same if they feel comfortable doing so
 - Implementing a policy against exclusionary, stigmatizing, and discriminatory language.
 - Speaking up when you hear someone using exclusionary language. Gentle correction, privately and in the moment, is a powerful way to give feedback. For example, try saying “Hi John, I know you didn’t mean anything by it, but I’d prefer it if we said “Well done, all” instead of “well done, guys’.”

- **Acknowledge that employees come from a variety of backgrounds, processing styles, and cultural values.**
 - Whenever possible, offer flexibility for religious practices and holidays so that employees can celebrate.
 - Recognize that some employees are caregivers for family or other loved ones. Offer flexibility and work with them to create a plan that allows them to fulfill their work and personal obligations successfully.
 - Offer safe opportunities for your team to share information about cultural traditions that matter to them.
 - Build appreciation for different styles of processing and expressing ideas. For example, some people engage more using their nonverbal body language and tones of voice, and some engage less. Celebrate the strengths that each employee contributes to a diverse and inclusive workplace environment.

- **Commit to an ongoing learning process.** Changes in the workplace will not happen immediately. Ongoing rethinking and relearning from employees, supervisors, and leadership are needed to create a sustained workplace culture of inclusion. The following resources may be helpful as you continue your learning:
 - The Office of Equity, Inclusion, and Employee Well-being (EIEW) is a campus-wide resource for independent learning, community, and high-level consultation and support on topics of diversity, equity, inclusion, and well-being. Explore the EIEW website and learn more [here](#).
 - Inclusion@UW courses are specifically designed for employees to learn and practice skills that build our collective capacity to promote UW–Madison’s commitment to value the contributions of each person...and create a welcoming and inclusive community for people from every background. Learn more [at this link](#).
 - Employee assistance can also be a great resource to talk more about specific changes you’d like to make in your workplace or to talk about this topic further one-on-one. Call

the EAO at 608-263-2987 or email eao@mailplus.wisc.edu, or call LifeMatters at 1-800-634-6433.

LifeMatters Webinar:

Understanding Culture and Embracing Diversity in the BIPOC Community Support Session
July 19, 2023, 12:00 p.m. – 1:00 p.m.

Since July is BIPOC Mental Health Awareness Month, LifeMatters will be exploring the many facets of culture and diversity, this webinar will enlighten individuals about how their upbringing and experiences influence their thoughts and actions toward people who are different from them. We will also focus on the challenges facing members of the Black, Indigenous, People of Color (BIPOC) community and how to be an ally.

To join the training session:

1. Click [here](#) to go to the Webex link.
2. Enter your name and email address.
3. Enter the session password: fhH5MEK9qg9
4. Click "Join Now".

New Podcast Resource

Our partners at LifeMatters are excited to bring you “OnTopic” a podcast dedicated to overcoming challenges in times of uncertainty. Employee assistance counselors will be talking to industry experts from a wide variety of fields to explore the issues of the day and steps individuals and organizations can take to become more resilient. OnTopic will be released every other Wednesday. The first episode of OnTopic is available now and focuses on talking to children about violence.

You can access OnTopic on [iTunes](#), [Spotify](#), or anywhere else you get your podcasts.