

**Audience**
Table Talk**DEI level**
Beginner**Time Allocation**
10 minutes

Learning Objectives

1. Understanding the role and responsibility of leaders (at all levels) to lead inclusively
2. Recognize behaviors that may undermine cultivating inclusion

Definitions

Inclusive Leadership: capacity to manage and lead a heterogeneous group of people efficiently, while respecting their uniqueness in an empathetic, bias-free way (workable.com).

■ Content

In organizations with inclusive cultures, individuals have a strong sense of accountability for leveraging inclusive behaviors and adapting flexible leadership styles. When we talk about commitment and accountability, we are speaking of a shared understanding and ownership of our individual roles and collective goals. However, to reach this level of engagement and responsibility, we must first ensure our workplace is a safe harbor for open dialogue, risk-taking, and creative problem-solving. An inclusive environment allows individuals to commit wholeheartedly to their roles, knowing they are empowered to make decisions and own their outcomes without fear of unjust criticism or punitive backlash.

Making A Commitment to Inclusive Leadership

To lead inclusively and foster psychological safety, it is crucial for each one of us to commit to cultivating a supportive and inclusive work culture with respect, empathy, and open communication where all team members feel valued, supported, and empowered to contribute their best. It takes courage to address negative influences and requires a concerted effort from leaders. Here are four behaviors we can all use with our teams or peers:

1. **Relationship Building:** Inclusive leadership cannot be transactional. Inclusive leaders invest time in building relationships with their team members and other departments to have the best results.
2. **Recognition:** Recognize contributions both large and small. This can be as simple as a thank you.
3. **Empathy:** Express appreciation for others' experiences and perspective.
4. **Seek Input:** Encourage others to share their expertise and opinions. You may need to use alternate approaches to get the level of input you're seeking.

Behaviors that can disrupt your personal commitment or cause others to believe you are not inclusive:

Public Shaming or Ridicule: Publicly shaming or ridiculing someone for making mistakes or sharing their thoughts makes individuals fearful of being vulnerable and contributes to a culture of fear.

Lack of Active Listening: When individuals fail to actively listen and understand the perspectives of others, it inhibits healthy dialogue and collaborative problem-solving.

Gossip and Rumors: Engaging in gossip or spreading rumors about colleagues erodes trust and makes employees wary of sharing information, as they fear their words may be used against them.

Excessive Competition: An excessively competitive culture, where employees feel the need to constantly outperform one another, can hinder cooperation and collaboration, hindering psychological safety.

Micromanagement: Overbearing micromanagement can cause employees to feel disempowered and undervalued, impacting their willingness to take initiative or share ideas.

Lack of Inclusivity: A workplace that lacks inclusivity and diversity may marginalize certain voices, making them feel unwelcome and inhibiting team members from being their authentic self.

Discussion Questions

- 1 How does “personal accountability” apply to me and my organization?
- 2 How can your commitment and accountability contribute to enhancing inclusion and psychological safety?
- 3 What steps will you take to hold yourself and colleagues accountable for fostering an inclusive work environment?

