HOW TO

BE INCLUSIVE OF DIVERSE VOICES
OVERVIEW

1) Understand your experiences
2) Possess an open mind
3) Let go of prejudice and bias
4) Appreciate difference
5) Listen to understand
6) Disagree respectfully
7) Make connections
8) Create space for everyone

OBJECTIVE

Being inclusive of diverse experiences and backgrounds is a necessary skill when forming opinions, having discussions, and living a well-rounded life with multiple perspectives on issues. Being inclusive of divergent experiences means understanding, acknowledging, and welcoming an experience that may be different from your own.

Being inclusive of multiple experiences is an important way to respect your peers and encourage them to respect one another. The following guide provides insight into how to become inclusive of diverse voices.
1. UNDERSTAND YOUR EXPERIENCES

Before you can be inclusive of experiences different from your own, you must understand your experiences. Your unique perspectives, feelings, race, ethnicity, geographic location, age, socioeconomic status, gender identity, sexual orientation, ability, affiliation, ideology, religious beliefs, and background shape how you interact with the world. It is important to consider how your background impacts your experiences and how these experiences may be divergent from those around you, particularly the privileges they may have afforded you.

2. POSSESS AN OPEN MIND

To be inclusive, first be open to accepting everyone and their unique contributions. As opposed to expecting someone to act a certain way, approach individuals ready for various possibilities. An open mind allows you and your peers to better cooperate and attain mutual understanding.
LET GO OF PREJUDICE AND BIAS

You cannot be inclusive of diversity if you hold prejudice or bias against a certain group, affiliation, or even one person in particular. It is important not to judge a person before truly understanding their circumstances and experiences. When you put your bias aside and strive to understand each person, you can be more open to their unique viewpoints.

APPRECIATE DIFFERENCE

You cannot be open if you believe that everyone should be like you. People have divergent families, personalities, beliefs, circumstances, skill sets, and passions, which lead to different experiences. If you accept that someone’s individual experience affects their views, you can learn to respect and appreciate their differences.
5: Listen to Understand

If you are communicating with someone, but do not have the intention to listen to their viewpoint, then you cannot truly be open to their differences. You must listen to understand so that you can comprehend what makes their perspective unique to them and find a way to bridge differences that may arise.

6: Disagree Respectfully

When realizing that you are in conflict with another individual, continue to listen to understand. Do not immediately jump into stating your perspective, but instead strive to comprehend their perspective. Ask thoughtful questions to gain deeper insight into their viewpoint. When offering your thoughts, frame them from your specific perspective and recognize the differences. Attempt to find areas of agreement to overcome conflict.
MAKE CONNECTIONS

We are all more similar than different. It can be very easy to judge differences, but it can be just as easy to find similarities. If you make connections between your own experiences and the experiences of others, you can find commonalities and build upon them.

CREATE SPACE FOR EVERYONE

Foster a space that allows everyone to freely and safely bring their background and experiences. Understand that how you operate in a space may be very different from how another person desires to participate. Ask individuals how they may feel comfortable in the space. It may be helpful to collectively set ground rules for the space. These ground rules should include keeping an open mind and not attacking personal beliefs.
By establishing a comfortable space to share experiences and ideas, you and your peers can create clearer avenues towards solving current and future problems. This inclusive environment is, in fact, a tool for productive cooperation and collaborative brainstorming.

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