



# Social Equity Foundations

## Volume 1

Social Equity Basics • Individual Activities • Team Activities

# INTRODUCTION

*The Office of Social Equity is ensuring social equity is embedded into the systems of the Oregon Transportation Department of Transportation as we work to fulfill our mission and honor our values. The Social Equity Foundations series serves as a collection of research-based information, tools, and resources to assist our agency in framing conversations, programs, projects, and policies in a way that allows us to successfully prioritize diversity, equity, and inclusion. ODOT is approaching this work with humility, intentionality, and transparency. This series helps us to be and remain accountable in our social equity work. We know that change is constant both in and outside of ODOT, so we offer the series as living documents that will be reviewed and updated annually.*

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## DON'T STOP HERE, WE HAVE MORE FOR YOU!

Find more learning tools and resources on the [Social Equity Resources](#) page.

Questions? Reach out to us at [SocialEquity@odot.state.or.us](mailto:SocialEquity@odot.state.or.us)

# SOCIAL EQUITY BASICS

This section is an introduction to social equity and helps to deepen understanding of why ODOT is prioritizing it as an agency. The objective for this section is to support readers in being able to confidently talk about what equity is, how it shows up or doesn't at ODOT, and how employees can be engaged in the transformative changes in equity that we are actively working through as One ODOT.

## AN EQUITABLE ODOT

### What is equity, anyway?

You have likely heard equity used with terms such as diversity and inclusion. While these words may seem similar and even synonymous, it's important to recognize that they have very different meanings and applications. ODOT uses the following enterprise-wide definitions for equity, diversity, and inclusion.

- ✘ **Equity** acknowledges that not all people, or all communities, are starting from the same place due to historic and current systems of oppression. Equity is the effort to provide different levels of support based on an individual's or group's needs in order to achieve fairness in outcomes. Equity actionably empowers communities most impacted by systemic oppression and requires the redistribution of resources, power, and opportunity to those communities.
- ✘ **Diversity** is the appreciation and prioritization of different backgrounds, identities, and experiences collectively and as individuals. It emphasizes the need for representation of communities that are systemically underrepresented and under-resourced. These differences are strengths that maximize the state's competitive advantage through innovation, effectiveness, and adaptability.
- ✘ **Inclusion** is a state of belonging, when persons of different backgrounds, experiences, and identities are valued, integrated, and welcomed equitably as decision makers, collaborators, and colleagues. Ultimately, inclusion is the environment that organizations create to allow these differences to thrive.

### Why should we care about equity?

As a collective, ODOT values equity because our agency cares deeply about the experiences and quality of life of ODOT employees, partners and communities. By prioritizing equity, we are making it clear that our work and investments must reflect that. Planning and projects have a significant impact on communities and we want to make sure that the way we invest creates space for similar outcomes for people, neighborhoods, and businesses statewide.

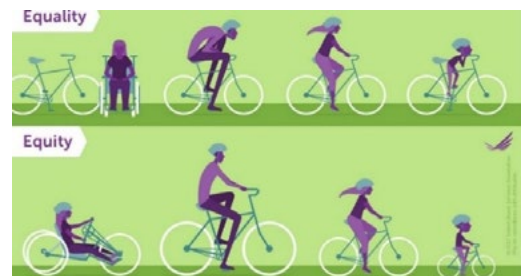


Image courtesy of the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation.

As employees, we value equity because we care about people knowing they are valued and appreciated. We care about people's skills and talents being used to their fullest potential.

### **You can make a difference.**

A lot of things in life are a choice. Just as we can choose to drive safely or extend grace and patience to our coworkers during difficult times, we can choose to promote and elevate equity within ODOT. We started by adding an Assistant Director for Social Equity to our executive team. Why? Because without equity, we cannot create or sustain a healthy, thriving organization, nor can we meet the needs of all Oregonians in a fair and humane way.

Equity is one of ODOT's core values, and we are investing in it from the very top of the organization.

**Watch this *interview with Nikotris Perkins* to learn more about our newest Assistant Director and the significance of her work and presence in ODOT.**



No matter our position or rank in the agency, our job description, or our physical location in Oregon, we can all elevate equity. And it starts with listening to each other. Do you know someone on your team who won't share feedback for fear of retribution? Perhaps this person attempted to share feedback in the past and their opinion was ridiculed or discounted? Foster a safe space for them and encourage them to participate in meetings and discussions. And then, really listen to and consider their contributions. Are you part of a project that may disrupt a community in some way? Is your project team diverse enough to represent the community you will impact? If it's not, have a conversation with your boss or team about expanding community representation on the project.

Another thing we can all do to contribute to a more equitable ODOT is to willingly identify any unconscious biases we may have and pivot our daily behaviors where we live and work. An unconscious bias is a social stereotype about a certain group of people that we form outside our conscious awareness, shaped by things such as the media, misinformation, and our own limited personal experiences. In her TED Talk, [The Danger of a Single Story](#), Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie describes just how easily these unconscious biases can form, and how dangerous and dividing they can be for humankind. Chimamanda states, "Show a people as one thing, as only one thing, over and over again, and that is what they become." The depiction of a single story is precisely how unconscious biases form. We see a group of people portrayed a certain way over and over again, and our brain comes to assume that that is the accurate (and only) depiction of that group.

**Watch Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's TED  
Talk, *The Danger of a Single Story*.**



Curious to see what unconscious biases you may have? Harvard University created [Project Implicit](#), a free resource which allows anyone to test their unconscious biases. Awareness of our biases is truly the first step in taking action against inequity. And make no mistake: to remedy current and prevent future inequities it takes much more than a mindset change or social media post. It takes **action**. Actions that aren't always easy and often prove uncomfortable. But if we want to elicit real change in ODOT, in our communities and in our nation, we must be willing to embrace a bit of discomfort.

**ODOT Can Make a difference.**

Equity is an agency priority. We are not only defining how we can increase, strengthen and develop better practices and policies, we are adding tangible measures to our progress. These measures will be made clear through the Strategic Action Plan developed in partnership with the Oregon Transportation Commission over the next few months. Implementation of more equitable processes and measures will mean engaging a team of people from across the agency. This team will be resourced, supported, and held accountable for utilizing an equity lens and framework in their day-to-day work. More information about this group will be made available in the fall, so please stay tuned.

If we all take ownership in understanding, supporting and actively promoting equity across ODOT, we can create an agency where all of our employees, partners and those we serve feel valued and supported regardless of their race, ability, income or gender. We can make an equitable ODOT.

*-Your Agency Leadership Team*

## CREATING WORKFORCE EQUITY AT ODOT

By Lisa Brown

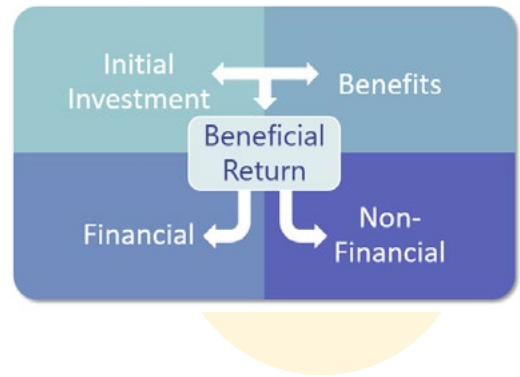
It is essential to review histories and systems that have allowed oppression to thrive to understand how people are not starting from the same places when they show up to interview at ODOT. Let's take a look at what we're doing at ODOT to combat oppression and create equity in our workforce. In December of 2019, ODOT stood up the Office of Social Equity to ensure equity is integral to the systems of ODOT as we work to fulfill the value of embracing diversity and fostering a culture of inclusion. While the Office of Social Equity (OSE) is working to build equity in many spaces at ODOT, I want to focus specifically on our workforce efforts. OSE and ODOT Recruitment collaborate to create an equity framework with inclusive engagement, recruitment, interviewing, and hiring. We use data to understand our current gaps and support equitable outcomes in recruiting, interviewing, and retaining employees. Diversity, equity, and inclusion help our agency and communities thrive. As One ODOT, we all have an opportunity to create an equitable culture.



The recruitment team is committed to intentional equity engagement on social media with college campuses, community organizations, and tribes. They are examining how we can grow existing ODOT Special Programs like the Maintenance Trainee Program (MTP), ODOT Internship Program, ODOT Graduate Program (formerly known as GEP), and ODOT Mentorship Program. Considering the process, the places, the people, and the power dynamic is vital in enhancing the equity framework. Our methods and programs will help us achieve results that are more equitable because we seek out ways to capture equity from the way we write our announcements to engagement methods. Our goal is for diverse candidates to get beyond minimum qualifications and manager screenings. For ODOT's workforce to reflect ALL the people in our community, diverse candidates must also make it to candidate interviews and be selected for hires and promotions. Creating equity on interview panels is a big key to ODOT's success in meeting our goals.

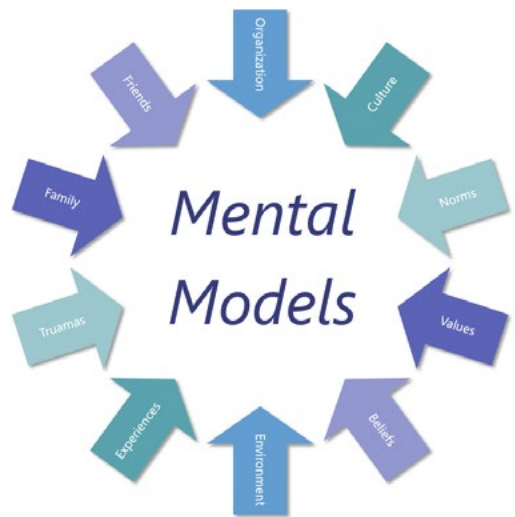
Interview panel training is something we anticipate in the future. A lot of the time, we hear, "Are they a fit for the crew?" When hiring, equity in recruiting means we are pivoting towards candidates that add value to our culture, not give us more of the same. We want to also avoid the **similar-to-me effect**. Think of it like an investment portfolio: each type of investment made will have different outcomes and what makes a portfolio strong is having diverse investments. Studies show that teams with diversity, equity, and inclusion have increased employee engagement

and trust, high worker performance, new perspectives that enhance innovation, reduced team conflict, and higher employee retention. High retention also has fiscal, workload management, recruiting, and training cost-saving benefits. Aside from formal training, managers and their teams invest in new employees with their effort and time. When we don't retain an employee, there is more work to do for the rest of the team, and our service levels can take a hit. Creating a culture of equity is not just a good investment in our people; there is a return on investment for our budgets, managers, and teams.



While our candidates start their ODOT experience with Human Resources, how a new hire experiences the onboarding process and how easily they can build relationships with their manager and the teammates are significant predictors of retention. I was recently in a meeting where the presenter said, "Equity without inclusion is dangerous." It's not just getting people in the door or past the interview phase. It's how we create a sense of belonging for ALL employees when they land. So how can we do that? What can we do to influence equitable practices in our work environment?

We have to get below the surface, think about how other people's identities might have shaped their values, beliefs, worldviews, privileges (or lack of), norms, perceptions, and awareness. What are all the things that happened in their life that made them who they are? Do you think their identities shaped their experience of the world or how the world experiences them? How have my own life experiences shaped my view of the world? How does that shape my interactions with people? How does the power or influence I hold support people in feeling included and in being successful? Inclusion requires us to examine other's life experiences and our own to achieve the goal of fostering inclusive workspaces. It's looking both inside out (the impacts of who we are on the world and people in it) and outside in (the impacts of the world and people in it on who we are).



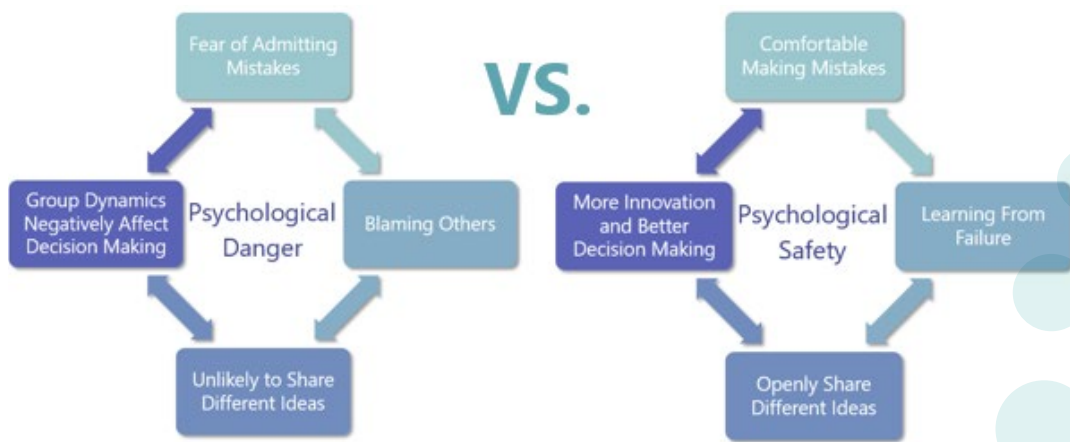
To get beyond the equity checkbox, it's critical to shift to equity engagement to create a culture of inclusion and fairness in outcomes. Let's think about how that looks in the work environment. There are physical tools needed to do the work. We give people an ergonomic workstation with monitors, desks, and chairs that adjust to fit the employee's physical stature. We ensure space for wheelchairs to enter workspaces and turn around or workspaces that allow people to stand or rotate stationary positions with desks that raise or sit/stand stations. With COVID-19 and people working from home, we permit people to take home their ergonomic



chairs, computer monitors, and keyboard trays. We fit people for safety safety vests, winter weather gear, and equipment harnesses. The items selected are based on the needs of each individual. These actions work to create equity in safety. But, how do we make space for all team members to succeed?

Knowing where an employee is at allows us to offer the proper training and support for our people to be successful. We can engage in conversations to learn about where each individual is in their knowledge of their role. Do they have experience operating snowplows and performing winter road maintenance? Have they just participated as a reviewer of engineering plans, or did they design and stamp? Do they have manual or electronic equipment surveying experience? Did they work in a customer service role where they had to know laws, policies, and procedures? Do they have experience developing economic reports with historic fiscal patterns and projections?

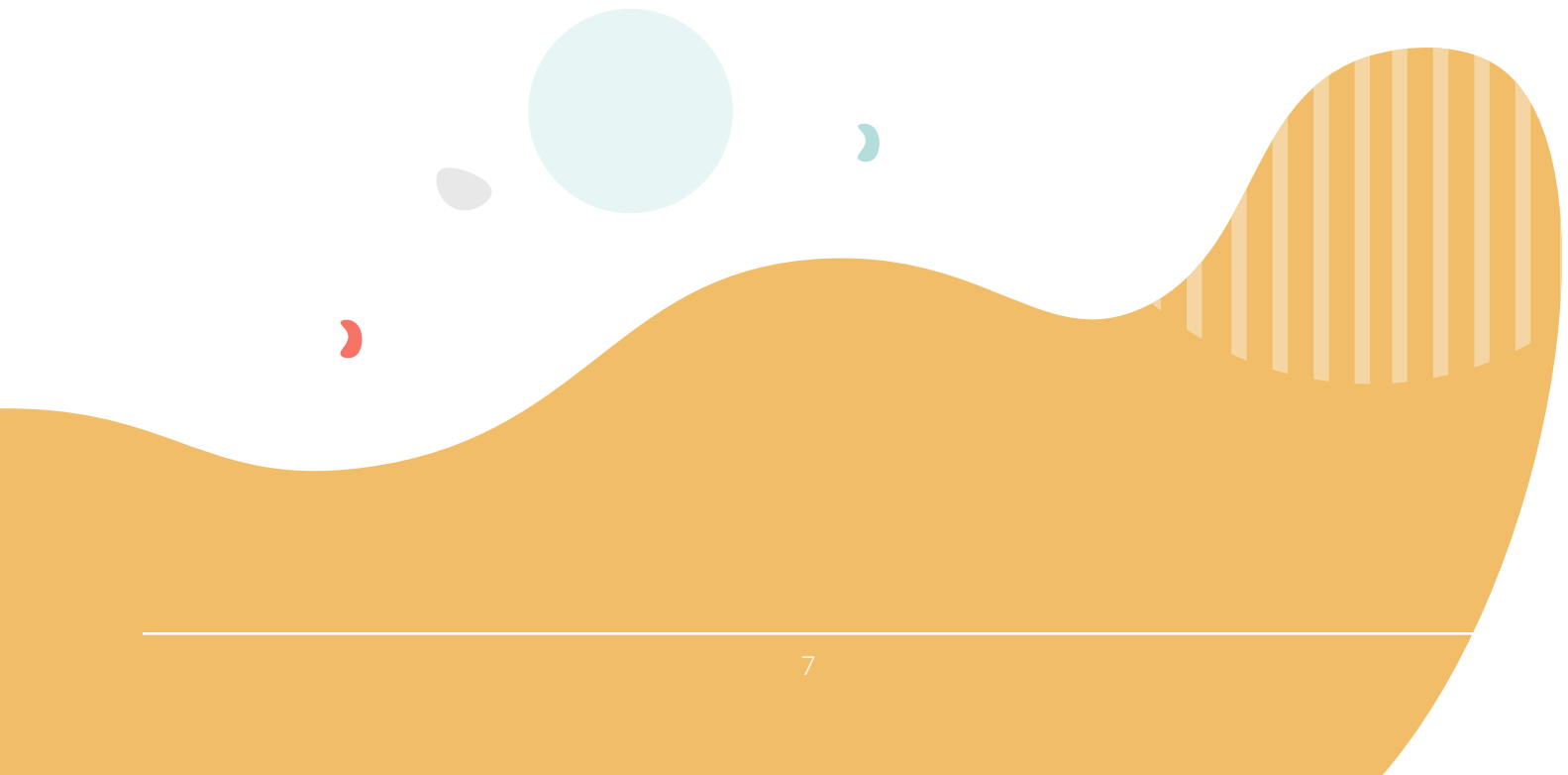
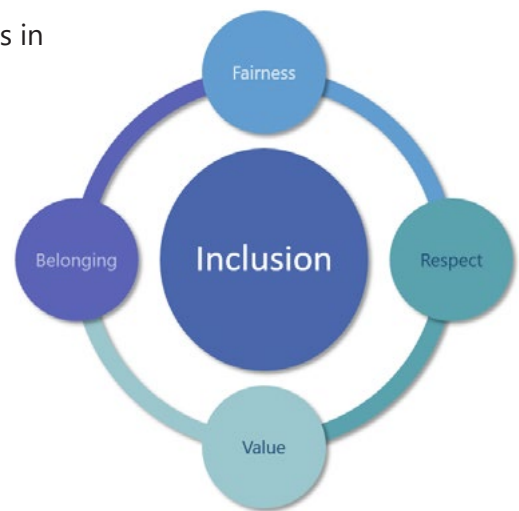
When we know where employees are at, we can then take steps to demonstrate how ODOT is investing in their future. This means creating development plans specifically tailored to each person’s development, goals, and career pathing opportunities (e.g. encouraging training opportunities and job rotations that support them in getting to their next goal). It also requires us to examine our methods to figure out if we are creating environments that support success. Is there early and often feedback from the manager and team to know when they are doing well or when they need to shift gears to achieve successful outcomes? Do we create psychological safety for employees to feel comfortable making mistakes? These actions help our employees know we support their aspirations and invest in their success at ODOT. Giving the resources that fits each individual creates equity in employee development and prepares people for promotional opportunities. There is still one more critical factor to getting people to stick around: feeling a connection to our team and our organization.



To get to a deeper level of equity, inclusion and belonging, we must actively seek to understand the social identities of others. Why do people stay or leave employers? People feeling they are treated fairly, respected, valued, included, and a

sense of belonging are giant predictors of employee retention. How do we create space for employees to experience these things? Is there someone on the team (or the whole team) who offers to have lunch with the new person? What activities do we do on our teams to foster authentic engagement and inclusion (e.g. meeting icebreakers, sharing what holidays team members celebrate, team bonding activities, etc.)? Do we engage everyone’s perspectives and actively ask for input from all team members? Are we making space for everyone to talk in meetings? Do we use inclusive, people-first language in our discussions? Do we honor people’s intersectional identities? Are we paying attention to what microaggressions are taking place and addressing them? How and how often are managers checking in with new hires and current employees to see what they need to be successful?

Inclusion and belonging on a team are the most profound drivers in employee retention. Applying policies, procedures, and practices that promote a diverse workforce must be evidenced by our outcomes in hiring, retention, and promotion of diverse populations. If we keep asking ourselves these questions and take action where we fall short, we can create an equitable workforce at ODOT.



# HARD CONVERSATIONS AT WORK

By Nikotris Perkins

Hard conversations are common. They happen at family gatherings, they happen in tragedy, and they also happen at work. They happen when someone calls and asks why they didn't get the job, they happen when I make a mistake, forget a deadline; it can happen around a performance expectation or even growth opportunities. "Hard" is also subjective, but for the purposes of this discussion, when we talk about hard we are talking about conversations that cause friction with our values, ideas, or even identity. It's a conversation that is labeled political, vulnerable, normal, aggressive, and inappropriate or as just a result of humanizing depending on who you ask.

**Custom is just as real as law and can be just as dangerous.**

- Toni Morrison (Home)

**Learning Objective:**  
*Hard Conversations at Work can be presented to any team at ODOT. Assistant Director for Social Equity Nikotris Perkins references some personal experiences or examples in this presentation on guiding us on how to have and frame hard conversations. When presenting this material to a group, the **TEAL** text are spaces where you might choose to insert your own experiences and examples in your own voice.*

When hard conversations happen, what we know, what's at stake and how we feel all contribute to the outcome of the conversation. We have A LOT of documents at ODOT and I have yet to see one that does not say "all Oregonians." We pride ourselves on being One ODOT. Sometimes we are two landmasses with a big space in the middle. To be the bridge of belonging, safety, well-being, and minimizing harm we must have those hard conversations and bridge the gap.

**The Oregon Department of Transportation prioritizes diversity, equity, and inclusion by identifying and addressing systemic barriers to ensure all Oregonians benefit from transportation services and investments.**

**We are focused on:**

1. Culture, Workforce, Operation, and Policy
2. Economic Opportunity
3. Engagement
4. Climate

Equity acknowledges that not all people, or all communities, are starting from the same place due to historic and current systems of oppression.

Equity is the effort to provide different levels of support based on an individual's or group's needs in order to achieve fairness in outcomes.

Equity actionably empowers communities most impacted by systemic oppression and requires the redistribution of resources, power, and opportunity to those communities.

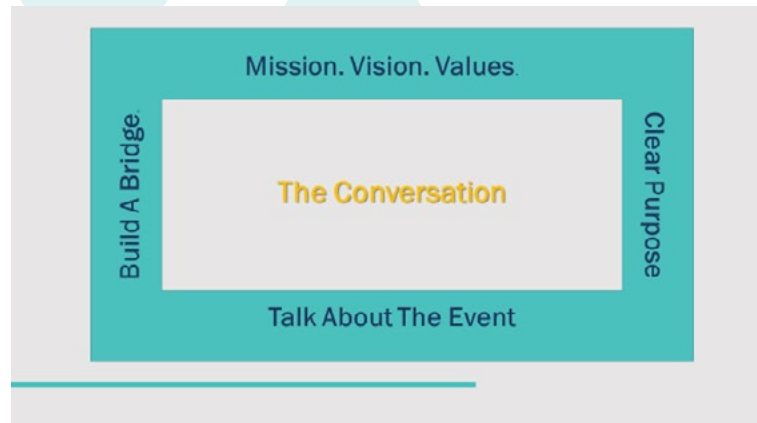
State of Oregon June 2020

**Framing Conversations:** As we have hard conversations, we frame them because we are trying to think about ways we can make this a picture-perfect conversation. Sometimes that is going to mean, though, that the picture is not going to turn out perfect but the frame is exactly what it needs to be.

**Mission. Vision. Values:** In that frame, at the top of the frame are our mission, vision, and values. We must know what they are and how they operate. We want to be clear, that what we do in our hard conversation reflects our mission, vision, and values of ODOT. We want to make sure we are building a bridge by creating, developing, and sustaining relationships. The goal of calling someone out or interrupting them is to call someone into the conversation and build a relationship that would allow us to have better trust, communication, transparency, and psychological safety. We want people to be able to make mistakes, ask questions, and feel free to speak up without fear of being punished.

**Clear Purpose:** We want to be clear in our purpose for the conversation. Often times, we go into a conversation because we want to feel better. That is a purpose for some conversations but it is not the purpose of a hard conversation. We are looking to create awareness that what they said or did was offensive and then influence a behavior to change. For example, we want people to be aware that what they said was harmful and not repeat that type of behavior or use that language in the future. We want everyone to be aware that we are a workforce of teams that don't use harmful language and that we are aware of the history of words or phrases that are harmful and the feelings of the people on our team and in our communities. We want to stick to events, not people.

**Talk About The Event:** If I am having a conversation and **Nicole** comes into the room and says, *"Alright girls, let's get this work done!"* I might interrupt her and say something like, *"Nicole, I think you were talking to all of us but, not everyone sees themselves as a girl and some people might be offended by that. Maybe we can say something more inclusive like, let's go folx something, that's more inclusive of everyone in the room. This way people know that you understand who they are and respect all their identities."* I am intentionally not saying things like **Nicole**, *"How dare you! Who raised you! I can't believe your mind works like that, I thought better of you!"* So, we want to call attention to the language that was used and the language we can now use, not **Nicole** as a person, as we are talking about the event.



This can also apply to discussions we have about world or national events. For example, the events that took place at the United States Capitol on January 6, 2021. It has been labeled many things depending on who you talk to. People might say it was an insurrection or a riot. People do talk about these types of things at work, so we do it by sticking to the event. For example, people went into the United States Capitol building without following the proper protocol and procedure. It requires permission, pre-approval, and without these things, the protocols are not met.

**Keeping This in Mind...**

Ask Questions	Listen to Understand	Be Willing to Pause	Check for Understanding
Can you expand? Can you explain? I don't understand, can you clarify?	Focus on what is being said instead of how you will respond. Embrace the silence.	If it is shifting your energy too much, make space to come back. Be willing AND Do It.	This is what I heard... Is this what you meant...

"There's a lot going on, can you believe these people?!"

I want to make space to acknowledge that a lot is going and give people a moment to simply breathe and be present. With threats of violence after proof of similar promises is a lot to take on as we think of how to serve, live, and make sense of it all, as most of us have not lived through anything similar to this.

When I was in 8th grade, I was privileged to go to Washington D.C. and visit the United States Capitol. Each student had to write letters and complete forms to gain access to enter. Teachers had to get everyone's forms turned in and coordinate with people who worked for the Capitol visitor's team. The Capitol visitor's team had to clear us for entry, give us badges to enter, and connect us to our visitor guide. There was a kid named Evan who didn't turn his paperwork in on time, and he didn't get to go - because he did not follow the protocol and procedure.

So, we know that there are protocol and processes required to enter the United States Capitol and they were not followed on January 6, 2021. That event means that they are people that didn't follow those processes or procedures; the event demonstrated that to us. We are not talking about the people, whose faces were caught on camera, their beliefs, their purpose, or our feelings about it. We are talking about the event.

We ask questions to be clear about what happened, what we heard, or how to clarify how we understood it. We listen to understand and not respond, and this happens as we are silent, so there is full space for the person to speak. There are times when you may need to pause the conversation because you can tell in those moments an exchange will not result in an outcome that will be beneficial for either party., Let the other person know you need some time to think about it, process, and return to the conversation, and be willing to really do that.

## Thinking About the How

**Leadership in Conversations is hard:** Leadership is not defined by position. Anyone can interrupt offensive conversations or offer other ideas regardless of if it's about the words, definitions, policies, or operations. We want an environment where people lead from any seat and can interrupt and call anyone in.

**Decreasing Defense:** We want to decrease defense and check our offense. When I do this I need to focus not on how I am offended but how I can build a bridge. I am here with the purpose of creating understanding and changing a behavior. I am not there to let you know how much you have offended me, my family, my friends, my beliefs, etc. My purpose is to build a bridge and it requires us to decrease the defense of the person we are talking with.

I could've also said something like, "Hey Nicole, I don't think that everyone identifies as a girl. I know that sometimes people have a close relationship with friends and say things like 'Hey, what's up girl.. However, that doesn't mean that we allow everyone to talk to us in that way. Maybe you could instead say everyone, y'all, folx, team, etc. because I know you want everyone to feel included." You could also offer that this is not about them; you have heard this happen in many spaces at work. You're not coming to them because they are wrong or you don't want them on the team. The goal is to lower defenses and get people to connect to what you're saying so there can be an awareness and change in behavior. It's to see how we can shift. All of us have done or said things in the past that don't work now or we know didn't work then but we are being inclusive and cognizant of the fact that language shifts.

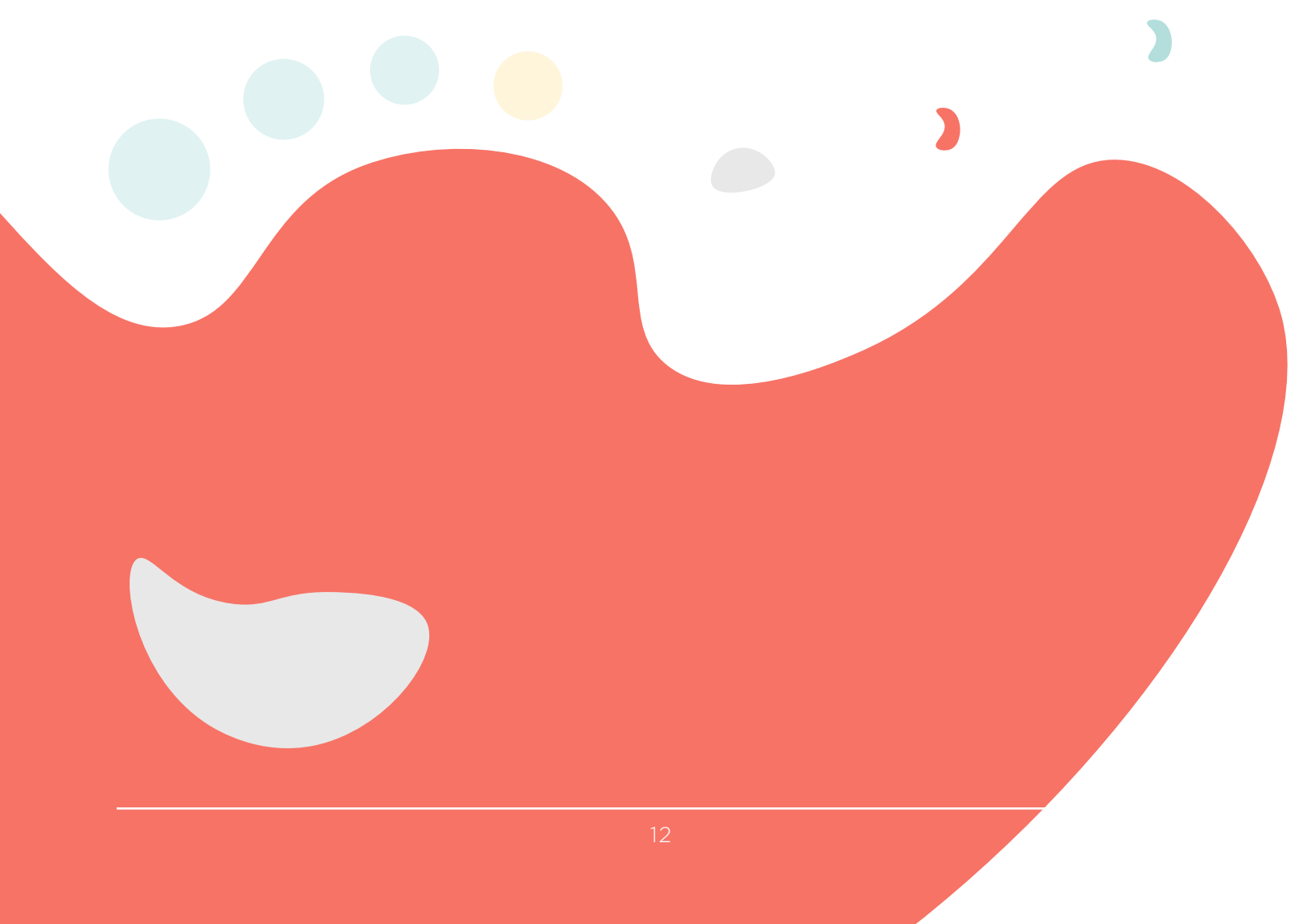
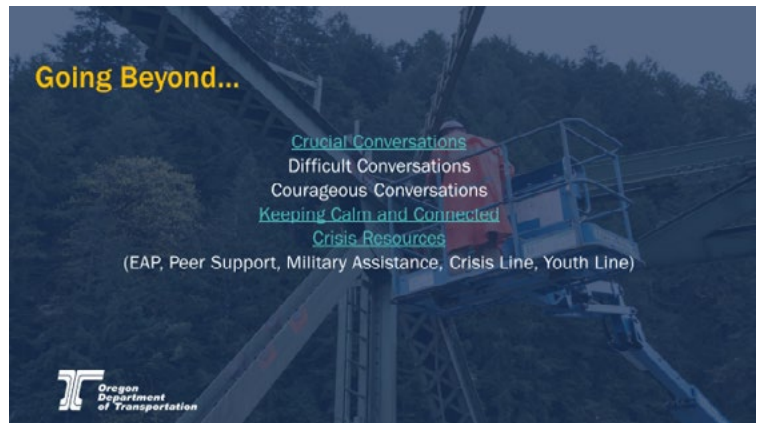
We have to demonstrate in our actions and words that we want ALL people to feel like they are included and belong, and that it is important to us all the time. Truthfully, that has not always been our reality, so we want to make sure that even when language was accepted in the past, we understand it is not moving forward.

**Offer Empathy and Ask for Grace:** Offering empathy in this space means we are doing our best to understand what it feels like when someone pulls the air out of a room. You may have felt your stomach drop, your heart race, your face flush, or you may have felt annoyed, in disbelief, or in agreement with what was said. All of those responses can happen. Sometimes it's the delivery not always what you're saying. So, because Nicole was so excited when she came in the room, you might instead offer something like, "I'm excited folx! Let's go everybody! One ODOT, let's get to work!" In this, you have modeled different language that is inclusive.

The follow up would be a conversation with Nicole where you could ask her, "Did you notice how everyone shifted when the word "girls" was used to address everyone?" You could let her know, "I followed up with folx and everyone because I know that wasn't your intent." In offering empathy and grace, let her know that together we can make sure everyone feels included and next time we can use inclusive words and that you are happy to help her find alternatives if she

wants support in that. Empathy and grace help these hard conversations in being successful without creating discourse or alienation.

Additional learning opportunities and employee support exists in these spaces for ODOT employees.



## CALLING IT OUT BY CALLING PEOPLE IN

By Lisa Brown

Have you ever been in an uncomfortable conversation with a friend because something they said landed wrong? It was probably pretty obvious by your face and the moments of awkwardness that followed when the person who said it noticed too. Now, interrupting someone from saying something that is intentionally harmful to others is something we want to do. However, calling them out in a harmful way isn't effective. Calling people out can alienate them and can make others fear to speak up, create fractured relationships, and may cause long-term challenges. Shaming people is counterproductive. We don't want to push them out, so what do we do?

Calling people in isn't needed when someone buys butter instead of margarine. So, I'll share a difficult conversation I had with a friend about hardships and biases. They described their hardship of being a single mom and the judgment and bias they experienced. I could relate to that, as I am a single mom and there are definitely struggles we shared. Where the conversation went next was more challenging for me. My friend made a comparison to their level of hardship being equal to hardships faced by people of color. How could I create a brave space in this moment? We have a relationship where psychological safety exists and because of that, we can trust each other to present perspectives outside the status quo and it won't fracture our friendship because of the care we take for one another in our discussions. When we talk, it's free from blame, rejection, finger pointing, and no one is going to be penalized for their perspectives. It's not always easy but it's necessary to go into hard conversations with compassionate curiosity. I listened and acknowledged my friend's thoughts and feelings. She knows that even when we hold different perspectives, I value her, and I want to listen to her. I wanted to learn more about why she felt those comparisons aligned and what experiences may have shaped that perspective. I didn't want to call her out; I wanted to call her in. I asked thoughtful questions so we could walk through and unpack the comparison she made together.

I asked, "Were you able to build trusting relationships where you felt safe in being vulnerable before telling people that you are a single mom?" "What biases did you notice?" "How did that make you feel?" I expressed my genuine concern and empathy for what she felt and the hurt it caused her. Exploring difficult questions in a way that shows compassion and encourages people to think critically requires everyone in the conversation to think outside their own perspectives. I asked questions like, "When you apply for jobs or walk into an interview room, do people automatically know you are a single mom?" and "How might the experience be different for people of color have when they apply for jobs or walk into an interview room?" By the end of our discussion, she shared that she had never thought about having the opportunity to share her vulnerability when it felt safe to

### **Learning Objective:**

*Use this resource to support you in having dialogue in difficult conversations, through discomfort, in a way that maintains the relationship and helps shift negative or offensive behavior.*

### **Resources:**

[Calling People Out – Harvard Business Review](#)

*(3-minute read)*



her. Being a single mom was invisible until she chose to share. She arrived at the conclusion that though she had faced bias and hardships, they did not happen just because of the color of her skin. I did not tell her what to think, instead I “called her in” to the conversation. We were both genuinely curious, open to considering each other’s ideas, and we both grew our perspectives.

We want to create an environment where people aren’t afraid to make mistakes or be authentic. Offering questions that help us think critically about the situation might lead people to say, “I hadn’t thought about it in that way.” Calling out assumes the worst in people, draws lines in the sand, and widens the divide in our relationships. Calling people out

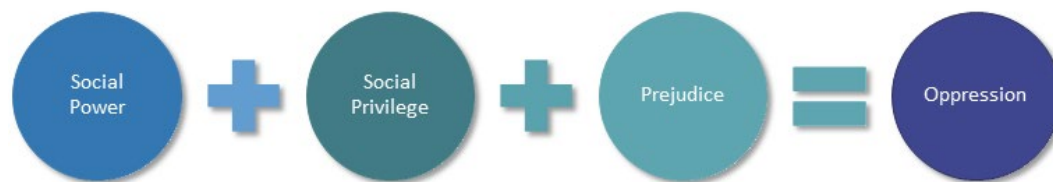
reinforces presumptions, bad behavior, resulting in people digging their heels in, and damaging relationships so much that it can feel like no attempt to mend fences is good enough. The goal isn’t to cancel people; we want them to grow. Calling people out doesn’t leave either person feeling good but calling people in can do that. Calling people in helps us to build understanding, leaving everyone thinking about each other’s perspectives. Calling people in means there is the chance to figure it out and do the hard work together.



## WHY OPPRESSION?

By Lisa Brown

Oppression is a heavy word. Heavy because its impacts are deep and wide. Heavy because of the harms and burdens it places on people. Heavy because it can trigger feelings of accusation, guilt, annoyance, and even anger. In the simplest terms, oppression is social power, privilege, and prejudice in systems that create multilayered inequities. Sustained and reinforced through actions, laws, policies, and processes it has shaped society in the United States over the last few hundred years. Interpersonal relationships, school, work, and media have assisted in sustaining it as they support stereotypes and perceptions for entire groups of people based on identities such as ability, age, ethnicity, language, gender, nationality, race, religion, sexual orientation, and socio-economic class. This is why the word is contained in the definition of equity. This heavy word is something we must recognize and address in order to make the shifts we desire at ODOT. So, we are sharing ways it shows up in the world and how that affects the workplace. It's not the easiest conversation to have and not a "feel good" topic, but in order to create a sense of belonging we have to address why and how people have not belonged.



Our definition of equity acknowledges that not all people or communities are starting from the same place. Learning about current and historic systems of oppression helps us better to understand the needs of our employees and communities and provides an opportunity to build inclusive partnerships that foster belonging. I learned if everyone works hard, they can be successful, and have found it is not true. The fact is that some of our systems do not turn hard work into success for some people. Hard work is necessary, but so are opportunity, access, and relationships with the right people in the right spaces based in our current systems. There are full-time jobs that demand experience, pay minimum wage and do not offer health insurance; that doesn't seem like success to me. At ODOT, we are prioritizing having a diverse workforce and creating inclusive workspaces, we build strong partnerships with businesses that are owned by BIPOC, women, or other current or historically marginalized groups, and we set parameters for our external business partners to do the same. So, we have to find ways to provide the right level of support based on individual's or group's need to achieve fairness in outcomes. To learn more about how things became inequitable and how they might show up in our workforce and communities, let's explore inequities

### **Learning Objective:**

Use this document to learn about how oppression currently and historically impacts specific groups of people more than others. We will explore the research on the systems that have allowed oppression to thrive and how it prevents access for marginalized groups of people in homeownership, education, and employment.

in homeownership, education, and employment and the impacts we still face today because of them.

Homeownership is critical to a robust economy and the most reliable way to build generational financial health. It gives people buying or borrowing power as they leverage the home asset to send children to college, or open a business. Unfortunately, policies and practices prevented Black and Latino people from obtaining home loans for many years through [Redlining](#). It impacted the entire country, and there was a robust redlining program in [Oregon](#). Regardless of income, credit borrowers of color were only offered high-risk home loans, which in many cases had a 5% higher interest than White borrowers with similar credit scores and financial situations. While policies and practices to reduce access to homeownership may seem like a thing of the past, they [influence home values more today than they did in 1980](#). Just within the last year, [home appraisers have undercut values of homes](#) when the owner is Black. When a White person poses as the homeowner at additional appraisals, the same properties have been appraised at much higher rates, in fact, just about double. Imagine if you made half as much profit on the sale of your home because of the color of your skin. That is systemic oppression.

With lower property value assessments in BIPOC neighborhoods, tax based revenues that contribute to schools are significantly reduced. This means the quality of the education is dependent on the wealth and value of properties in a community. This is how housing then contributes to education inequities and systemic oppression. To bring clarity to how deeply this affects education, let's look at the impact per student. On average, \$334 more is spent per White student per year than spent per BIPOC student per year. Schools with a 90% population of BIPOC students receive \$733 less per student than White students. Any increase of 10% BIPOC students in the school results in a decrease of \$75 spent per student. Educational equity barriers don't just exist by race, students [who are English language learners](#) (not as a first language) and [students with disabilities](#) experience educational disparities too. Redlining impacts education, employment, and [wealth patterns](#) in the United States and has created a persistent [racial wealth gap](#). If marginalized populations are able to get the education and experience necessary as well as forge the proper relationships, what does it look like to secure a well-paying job?





Studies have shown that identical resumes with “White sounding” names on average get about **1/3 more callbacks** than applicants with “ethnic sounding” names, **men are favored** in hiring decisions over women and **only 13% of companies** have reached the US Department of Labor’s target of hiring at least 7% of people who identify as having a disability. If we look at ODOT data from June 2020, BIPOC candidates and women are less likely to make it through the application and selection processes and have lower retention and promotion rates. We are also below the labor force averages for BIPOC employees. ODOT has an overrepresentation of women and BIPOC employees in entry-level positions and an underrepresentation in elevated roles based on our **McKinsey, ODOT, Women in the Workplace study**. Oregon data compared to ODOT data helps us to realize our areas for growth so we can create strategies that support fair and equitable outcomes in our hiring, retention, and promotion at ODOT.

Recently, our recruitment team has taken this data along with applicant and employee feedback to examine and shift processes to improve equity in recruiting, hiring, retention, and promotion. This work will support an increase in diversity and measurable and sustainable equity in our workforce. The recruitment team has already worked through many aspects to improve equity like building partnerships with community organizations, Oregon tribes, and historically Black colleges when recruiting for job vacancies. Our recruitment team has redesigned the way they write job announcements and questionnaires that are more gender and ability inclusive, and have made position descriptions accessible to all applicants.

More work is underway to embed equity into interview processes, as well as expand programs like Maintenance Trainee Program, ODOT Internship Program, ODOT Graduate Program, and ODOT Mentorship Program. ODOT’s Learning and Development team hosts training on Effective Coaching, Crucial Conversations, Crucial Accountability, Emotional Intelligence, and Leveraging Feedback all of which have components that support managers and employees in creating inclusive workspaces. Our HR teams’ work will to support ODOT in closing the gap and ensuring our workforce will reflect ALL the people in our communities.

## UNCONSCIOUS BIAS I

By A.J. Kam (they/them)

Do you like Oreos? Do you like to see your family for holidays? Do you do laundry once a week? My answers would be no, yes, and yes. What are yours? Meet Bob and Jim. Bob is a white evangelical Christian and conservative from the Midwest. His nephew, Jim is a liberal atheist living in a high rent condo on the East Coast. Do you think Bob likes Oreos? Do you think he wants to see his family for holidays? Do you think he does laundry once a week? How about Jim? ...and now, for the golden question: Who do you think you're most similar to? If you're thinking, a) That's not a fair question b) I don't have enough information or c) I don't know ... well, it was a trick question.

Whether or not you have an answer, **your brain already decided**. In fact, if you got a Magnetic Resonance Image, best known as a MRI of your brain while I asked you those questions, I would know **for sure** who you thought you were most like. It turns out, the part of the brain that's active when you're deciding if you like Oreos is also active when you're making that decision about the person you think is most similar to you. It is NOT active, when you are making that decision about the person who you do not think is like you. Whether or not we like it, our brains automatically choose whether someone is similar to us. We analyze a person's behavior choosing what we like, fear, question putting some people at an advantage because of the automatic processing of our brains. This automatic processing hidden from our conscious mind is called unconscious bias.

Unconscious bias is **beyond our awareness**. It's automatic, it's unintentional, it's involuntary, and it influences our understanding, actions, and decisions. That means what we say, what we believe, and how we behave do not always align. For example, how many of you know someone who prays every day, shares Bible scriptures with friends and family, but does things that do not align with their faith? It doesn't make them faithless, it makes them human. In the same way, we can believe racism is wrong, post about that belief on social media, and still do racist things.

I was in denial when I first learned about unconscious bias especially because my peers called me a fair, just, and values-based person. What I learned to accept was that I am all of those things AND I'm not immune to this, very human, trait. If you're also struggling to accept that unconscious bias is a part of you, know that research shows people who struggle the most to accept that are also the ones who value fairness the most, believe they are uniquely objective, and try to make fair-minded decisions. Those are all good things AND if we want to make the fairest decisions, we have to accept that our brains are just not good at it! It's no wonder we slip up and do things against our values without even realizing it. Lucky for us, there things we can practice to minimize our biases. After all, Bob and Jim both deserve a fair chance.

### Learning Objective:

*Use this guide to understand unconscious bias, how it occurs and what we can do to face it. Everyone has it! It's a continuous learning process that requires us to practice, progress and continually grow.*

### Resources:

[Implicit Bias: Why We're Awkward](#)  
(pbs.org)  
(3-minute watch)

[Check Our Bias to Wreck Our Bias](#)  
(pbs.org)  
(3-minute watch)

[Snacks and Punishment](#)  
(pbs.org)  
(2-minute watch)

[Take an Implicit Association Test](#)  
(harvard.edu)  
(10-minute each)

## THE BIG 10

# The Big 10

In the spirit of One ODOT, we are collectively learning and growing as a community in pursuit of social equity – in pursuit of creating a culture where all employees have a sense of belonging and engagement.

Understanding identity helps us honor each other as whole, unlearn misinformation, communicate about identity, and create genuinely diverse and inclusive spaces.

The Big 10 is a list of social identities that ODOT is using to focus our work through the Office of Social Equity. Though it is not exhaustive, we started with the list known as the “Big 8” commonly used as a starting point for equity and anti-oppression work. These eight are found to be the most significant when it comes to others’ expectations of us, how we are treated, and consequently, the benefits and burdens we face in the places we live and work. We have added age and first language as they are salient identities for ODOT’s social equity both internally and externally.

Common language is necessary for our collective learning, so these definitions are a resource to assist us in our journey. Also, words cannot fully capture the complexity of any identity so we encourage spending time in research, reflection and dialogue to learn more.

**One ODOT • Office of Social Equity**  
[SocialEquity@odot.state.or.us](mailto:SocialEquity@odot.state.or.us)

<p><b>Ability</b> Physical or mental functionality based on socially engineered spaces and places.</p>	<p><b>Nationality</b> Country of origin, citizenship, or affiliation. This may or may not be the country where one lives.</p>
<p><b>Age</b> Biological trait often assumed based on physical characteristics such as height, hair color, position/tittle and/or voice. An example of using age as a broad identity is the dismissal of college students because of assumptions about their maturity level and capability or the employment discrimination of older adults associated with their mental and physical capability.</p>	<p><b>Race</b> Invention of the 1800s historically based upon physical characteristics such as skin tone, hair texture, and shape of eyes and nose.</p>
<p><b>Ethnicity</b> Language and lifestyle informed by historical, cultural, religious, and/or national traditions and affiliations.</p>	<p><b>Religion</b> Set of beliefs and practices concerning the cause, nature, and purpose of the universe often providing a foundation for morals, values, and worldview.</p>
<p><b>First Language</b> Language that one acquires or is exposed to as a young child.</p>	<p><b>Sexual Orientation</b> Description of sexual attraction based on gender.</p>
<p><b>Gender</b> An internal sense of being that may or may not be aligned with the sex one is assigned at birth. For example, a person’s birth certificate may say male and they identify as a woman.</p>	<p><b>Socio Economic Class</b> Combination of access to money and social influence, often affecting occupation, education, food quality, housing, and safety.</p> <p><small>November 2020</small></p>

**Learning Objective:** Use The Big 10 as a resource to consider how each category shows up in your work at ODOT. Where do they present themselves in our recruiting, hiring, promoting, training, mentorship, engagement, contracts, projects, programs, practices, policies, and relationships with internal teams and external business partners and communities?

The Big 10 helps us to understand aspects we must consider and areas that inform and shape our decisions when we apply social equity in an intentional way in our work at ODOT.

## APPRECIATING ALL IDENTITIES

By Jen Midkiff

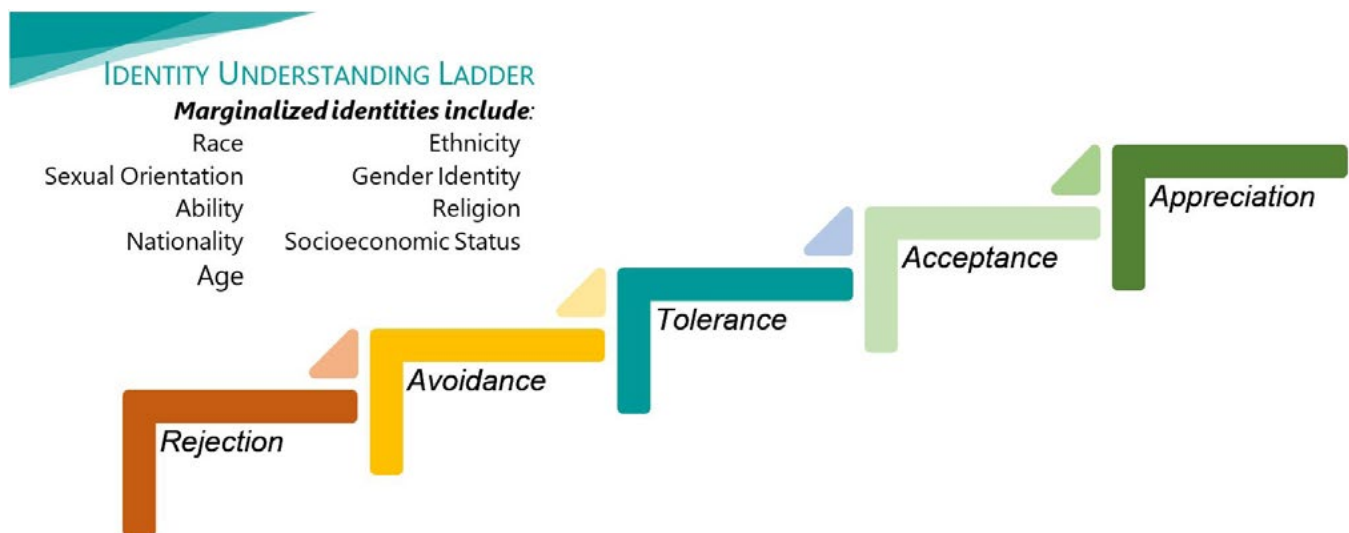
Do you feel appreciated? Appreciated for being exactly who you are, the totality of what makes you – well, you? Our own identity is both deeply personal and also, in part or in total, on display to others. I want to work in an environment that honors and appreciates all of me, a place where I can bring my whole self to work, not having to leave pieces of me at the door.

I want that for me, for you, and for all of us – working with one another with appreciation for who we are, with gratitude for what we each bring to the workplace, with kindness in our interactions, and demonstrating genuine care for all with whom we work.

Let’s look at the journey to appreciation in terms of diversity, equity, and inclusion. We are each a member of an identity group and often many identity groups at once. Social identity groups are such areas as race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, gender identity, ability, religion, nationality, socioeconomic status, and age. Our sense of identity is a complex and personal journey. As we examine how identity affects our interactions in the workplace, it may be helpful to look at our behaviors in a progressive manner toward appreciation. Behaviors that show up in all parts of our lives, to include the workplace.

**Learning Objective:**

*Learn more about identities people hold and how we can develop our understanding and appreciation for those identities.*



1. **Rejection:** The bottom rung on the ladder is **rejection**, when the rights and access of a marginalized group to participate in social group outcomes is defined. For example, asking people to change or adapt their name to fit an English-speaking paradigm (e.g. Juan becomes John).
2. **Avoidance:** Then we move to the rung of avoidance, when people with specific identities are **ignored** or given provisional or limited access to social outcomes,

(e.g. nursing mothers in the workplace are allowed private, but non-conductive spaces to express milk such as closets, bathroom stalls, or rooms far from their workstations).

3. **Tolerance:** Tolerance, a state often seen as final, is really only another rung on the ladder. Tolerance is when group identity is **allowed** but unsupported in terms of further rights and access (e.g. d/Deaf and Hard of Hearing architecture and mobility accommodations provide bare minimum access but not full membership in an activity).
4. **Acceptance:** The next rung on the ladder is acceptance, when rights and access are **supported** and we embrace people for who they are (e.g. employer's insurance provides coverage for same sex domestic partners).
5. **Appreciation:** The pinnacle, or last rung on the ladder is appreciation. This state of appreciation for people's identity is when we **advocate** for the right and access of others and celebrate their contributions to the greater community (e.g. hiring, retaining, and promoting people whose identities reflect the larger community in which we work).

This path to appreciation in the workplace is a critically important one. We all have a part to play in ensuring that ODOT is a place that appreciates the totality of each us, who we are, and welcomes our whole selves to the workplace, especially those identities that are marginalized by systems. That we don't rest on the rung of tolerance or acceptance but that we reach for the top rung of appreciation for all our colleagues, peers, and friends at ODOT.

## Resources:

[What is intersectionality](#)  
(3-minute video)

[Generative Conflict](#)  
(4-minute video)

[Tell me about your identity crisis.](#)  
[Cedrice Webber](#)  
(13-minute video)

[Identity and Strength are in Our Stories](#)  
(4-minute read)

[The Danger of a Single Story](#)  
[Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie](#)  
(18:30-minute video)



## PSYCHOLOGICAL SAFETY

By A.J. Kam (they/them)

Have you ever heard of the term “safe space”? The first time I heard it, I imagined a room with padded walls and people sitting in a circle being extra careful not to say anything offensive. I couldn’t fathom how a “safe space” would lead to a productive conversation and I thought it was a little ridiculous. Fortunately, I discovered my idea of a safe space was incorrect when I came upon a [study](#) Google conducted to find out what their most successful teams had in common. The most important component was psychological safety and it can be measured using the statements below.

### Psychological Safety

1. Members of this team are able to bring up problems and tough issues.
2. If I make a mistake in this team, it is held against me.
3. It is safe to take a risk in this team.
4. People on this team sometimes reject others for being different.
5. No one on this team would deliberately act in a way that undermines my efforts.
6. It is difficult to ask other members of this team for help.
7. Working with members of this team, my unique skills and talents are valued and utilized.

The more you and your team agree with the odd numbered statements and disagree with the even ones, the better. Psychological safety is a risk-taking environment built on trust -- a space for bravery and the willingness to be wrong. A safe space is a space of psychological safety. Basically, it’s the exact opposite of what I thought it was. The reason I’m explaining safe spaces (or as I like to call them, Brave Spaces) is to make it easier to identify harmful behavior. Harmful behavior is simply anything said or done that disrupts psychological safety. For example, not taking a colleague seriously when they say someone is discriminating against them, overlooking input from people who are in the minority, or ridiculing someone for mistakenly using non-inclusive language.

Interrupting these kinds of behaviors can be challenging, but if they go uninterrupted, it reinforces a harmful environment. This is important not only for the team as a whole and the person who is the target of the behavior, but also for you as an individual and the person you’re interrupting. For the person who exhibited it, it gives them important feedback. If they don’t care that their behavior is harmful, it reminds them it’s not something the team is willing to tolerate, and if they do care, it gives them the advice they need to improve. For the people who

### Learning Objective:

*Learn about what psychological safety is and how we can interrupt harmful behavior to sustain psychological safety on our teams.*

### Resources:

#### [Offensive Comments](#)

*(5-minute video)*

#### [Creating Psychological Safety at Work in a Knowledge Economy](#)

*Amy Edmondson, Harvard - Bing video (3-minute video)*

#### [Three Steps To Confronting A Co-Worker \(That Don’t Involve Either Of You Crying\) Forbes.com](#)

*(5-minute read)*

#### [How Psychological Safety Actually Works Forbes.com](#)

*(10-minute read)*

are negatively impacted by the behavior, it tells them their team cares about them and will stand up even when it's tough.

When interrupting harmful behavior, it's really important to do it in a way that fosters a brave space for everyone which includes both the person who was harmed and the person who caused it. Below is a list of strategies and examples of how you can interrupt harmful behavior in a way that decreases defensiveness, offers perspective, and ultimately restores psychological safety.

If you know the person you're interrupting might not respond positively in the moment...that's okay! People process at different speeds. Remember achieving social equity is a process. The important thing is that you interrupted the behavior and by doing so acknowledged the harm while moving the team back towards psychological safety.

**A colleague says, "I'm not racist, I have Black friends."**

Strategy	Example
Invite to dialogue	Hmm, can you say more about what you mean? I've heard that before and I've been wanting to talk about it.
Summarize and repeat	What I heard you say was, having Black friends means you're immune to saying or doing things that are racist. Is that what you meant?
Share your experience	I (a man) have lots friends who are women and I like to think I'm not sexist, but I realized I still say and do sexist things I don't even know are sexist! Actually, admitting when I'm wrong makes me a better ally to women.
Declare intolerable or unacceptable	That's not an acceptable thing to say.
Appeal to values	You rarely get defensive and you're good at receiving feedback, so what's going on?
Express your feelings	I'm bothered by that statement.
Ask them to explain	Can you explain what you mean by that?
Empathize with the underlying feeling	Being called out for doing or saying whatever it was I got really ticked off when someone said I was homophobic and
Give information	Having Black friends doesn't mean you're not immune to saying or doing racist things.
Involve others	I don't agree. Can we talk about that as a group? Is that how others feel?

## GENDER INCLUSIVE WORKPLACES

By A.J. Kam (they/them)

**A note from the author:** *Hi, my name is A.J. and my pronouns are they/them/theirs. I was assigned female at birth so most people think I'm a woman, however, I'm gender non-conforming or GNC for short. My style is usually androgynous. Forewarning! I will cover many things that contradict what we learned growing up, so to get the most out of this, keep an open mind and approach the information with curiosity. When it comes to LGBTQ+ related information, I always encourage people to "try on" the new information. Just like when you try on new jacket, "taking off" what you currently know is the best way to see how the new stuff fits. You can always take it back off. To be clear, my goal is not to change your beliefs; it's to give you information, a different perspective, and some tools to help you create a sense of belonging for all employees. If and how you choose to use them, is up to you. Lastly, keep in mind that sometimes the same term can mean different things to different people.*

### Learning Objectives:

*The goal of this document is to introduce you to the most important terms and concepts you will need to know to understand the "why" behind interpersonal transgender inclusive practices so you can help ODOT become more gender inclusive.*

### Part 1: Sex Assigned at Birth and Gender Identity

Okay. Let's start with the term sex assigned at birth. I use this wording specifically because it is the most accurate description of what happens. A baby is born, a medical professional looks between the baby's legs, and they assign them either male or female based on the baby's external sex organs. I'd be willing to bet you were taught that male and female were the only two sexes because I was taught the same thing. As it turns out, **many scientists** who study the biology of sex have concluded two separate and distinct categories are overly simplistic. The reality is there's a lot more variation among people than we often acknowledge so it's no surprise that some people cannot be easily placed into either category. Many people who have biological or genetic characteristics that are not what considered strictly male or female use the term **intersex**. This is a category of sex assigned at birth because some babies have ambiguous external sex organs so we know at birth that they are intersex. Intersex people make up **1.7%** of the population. To give you an idea of how common that is, it's the same percentage of people with red hair. Being intersex is just as common as having red hair.

Another thing we are taught is that sex and gender are the same thing. As it turns out, that's not true. When I first heard that, my (internal) reaction was some laughter followed by, "Seriously? Isn't it just common sense that sex and gender are the same?" If you think about it, that reaction makes sense because if everything you've ever known reinforces an idea, a challenge to it can sometimes seem ridiculous. I could go into fabulous details about how sex and gender are different, but let's just put it like this: Sex is between the legs and gender is between the ears. In other words, gender or more specifically gender identity is in the brain. It is a person's internal concept of self. The most common gender identities are man and woman; however, just like with sex, **experts** acknowledge

more than two gender identities exist and only acknowledging two is not accurate. Some examples of gender identities include gender non-conforming, genderqueer, and two-spirit. Please note! It is not necessary for you to know what those terms mean, not only because there are lots of them, but also because sometimes they mean different things to different people. This leads us to our first two gender inclusive practices. First, **if you encounter a term you're not familiar with and would like to learn about it, it's okay to gently say, "I'm not familiar with that term. Would you mind telling me what it means?"** Second, **don't argue with anyone about their identity** because that insinuates you know someone better than they know themselves.

Now that we've established that sex assigned at birth and gender identities are different, we can talk about the terms that describe the relationship between the two: cisgender and transgender. Cisgender is the most common and refers to when a person's sex assigned at birth and gender identity align in a traditional way. This includes people who are assigned male at birth and are men (cisgender men) or are assigned female at birth and are women (cisgender women). The term transgender (or trans for short) is less common and refers to when a person's sex assigned at birth and gender identity do NOT align in a traditional way. It describes people who are assigned male at birth but are NOT men or assigned female at birth but are NOT women. While cisgender describes only two genders, transgender describes a multitude of genders. The ones you may have heard are those that reflect the gender binary - the idea that there are only two distinct genders. Those terms are transgender woman and transgender man. A transgender woman is a person who is assigned male at birth and is a woman while a transgender man is a person who was assigned female at birth and is a man. The terms that people tend to be less familiar with are **non-binary** ones like genderqueer, gender fluid, and gender non-conforming.

This leads us to another trans inclusive practice: **saying "transgender people and cisgender people"** instead of "transgender people and normal people". This implies that there's something wrong with being transgender. Additionally, there is no such thing as normal person, so in talking to anyone just ask yourself: Is it kind? Is it intrusive? Is it necessary? Can I find the answer on my own?

## Part 2: Names and Pronouns

Whether gender pronouns, personal pronouns, or pronouns, all refer to third person pronouns or the words we use to refer to someone. In the English language, the most common ones we use to refer to people are he/him/his, she/her/hers, and they/them/theirs. The first two sets clearly imply binary genders- "He" pronouns are typically used for men and "she" pronouns are typically used for women. "They" pronouns, on the other hand, are gender neutral, which makes them especially useful when we don't know the gender of the person we're talking about or when someone's gender identity doesn't neatly fall in the category of man or woman.

## Resources on Pronouns:

[Why Singular 'They' Is a Controversial](#)

**Subject** Time

(10-minute read)

[Singular 'They](#)

Merriam-Webster

([merriam-webster.com](http://merriam-webster.com))

(7-minute read)

## Resources on Sex Assigned at Birth and Gender Identity:

[Creating a Safe](#)

[Workplace for](#)

[Transgender](#)

[Folks: Gender and](#)

[Pronouns in the](#)

[Workplace](#)

(5-minute watch)

[Seven Things About Transgender People](#)

[That You Didn't](#)

[Know](#)

Human Rights

Campaign

(10-minute read)

[Coming Out at Work](#)

Human Rights

Campaign

(5-minute read)

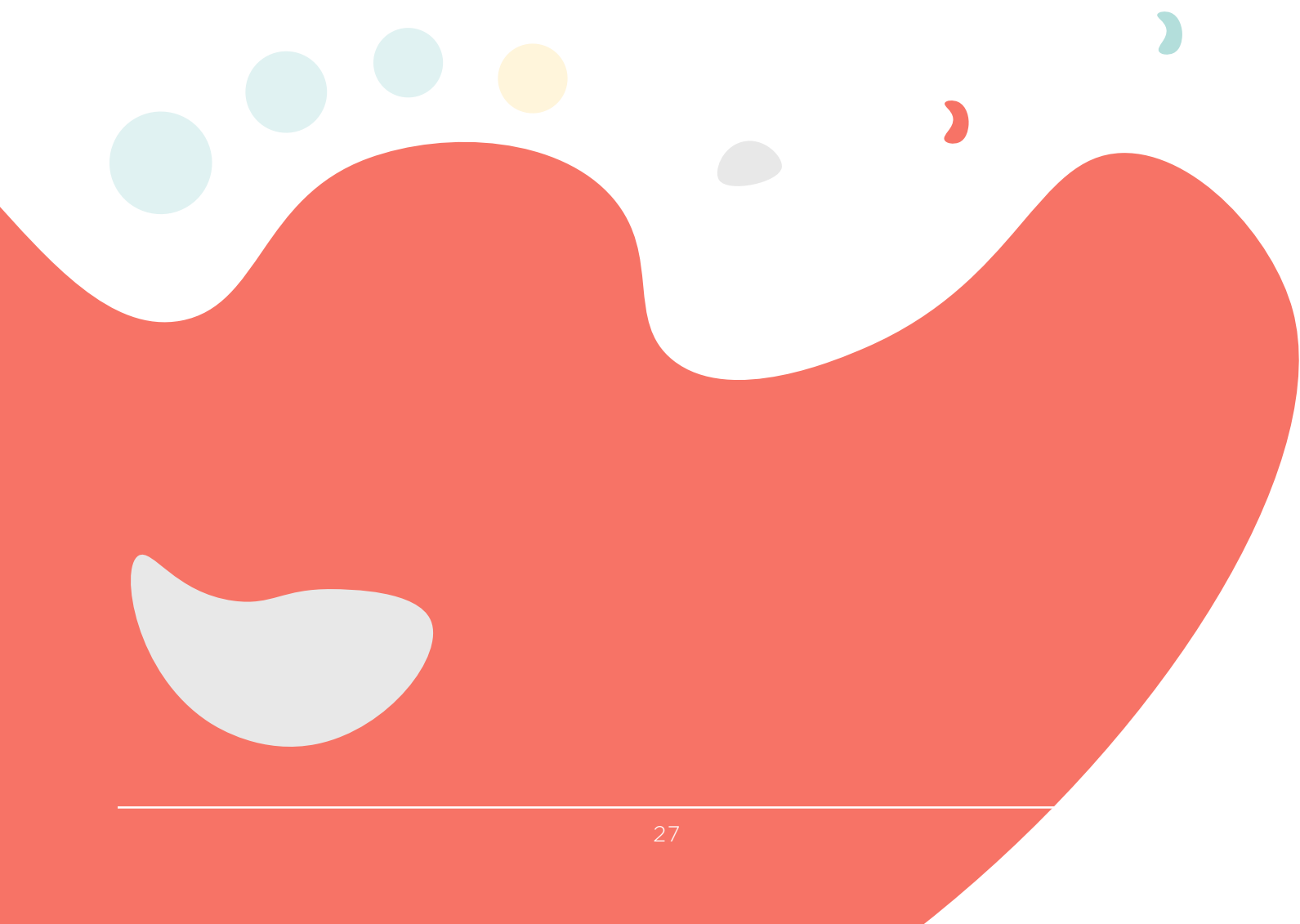
Most likely, you were taught that “they” pronouns are plural; however, they also refer to a single person. The singular “they” has been used for [centuries](#), and is considered grammatically correct by official style guides (e.g., [the Associated Press](#), the [APA Style Manual](#), the MLA style manual, the [Chicago Manual Style](#)). Not only that, everyone actually uses it pretty frequently! Here are some common examples: “Someone dropped their keys!” “Did anyone forget their badge?” “I know I’m going to like a person if they hate the cold!” (It’s also important to note there are gender-neutral pronouns other than “they” pronouns that are relatively new to English. See the 5 min individual activity for examples.) We often assume what pronouns people use based on our perception of their gender expression and most of the time we are right. In order to create inclusion in the workplace, the best thing to do that is to **introduce ourselves with our pronouns and ask others what pronouns they use**. To do this, you’d say, “My pronouns are he, him, his.” or “I use he pronouns.” You can also **put your pronouns wherever you have your name** like your email signature or nametag. To ask someone what their pronouns are, you could ask, “Which pronouns do you use?” or “What are your pronouns?” **In the event you don’t know someone’s pronouns, using “they” is the most inclusive.**

The last thing I am going to cover is names. As far as names go, our experiences often lead us use names as an indication of gender and this leads to incorrect assumptions. For example, have you ever assumed someone named Ashley was a woman only to find out Ashley is a man? Or assumed someone named Chris is a man when, in fact, Chris is a woman? Imagine how easy it would be to prevent that mistake and how nice it would be for people who are often misgendered if everyone’s names were accompanied by their pronouns! This is a classic example of why inclusive practices benefit everyone. Another thing to be aware of about names is that sometimes people choose to go by something other than the name they were given at birth. Whether someone’s given name is Robert and they choose to go by Austin or someone’s given name is Jonathan and they choose to go by Jessica, we should respect that choice. Name (and pronoun) changes for trans people are a very big deal because it’s a decision that often comes with a cost. That cost often involves losing important relationships to include family. Keep in mind that work may be the only place where we can truly be who we are, so doing your best to use our chosen names and pronouns can make a huge difference in our lives. Oh, and pro tip for those at DMV: If someone is changing their name on their ID, congratulate them! I guarantee you it’ll make their day.

As hard as you might try, messing up someone’s name or pronouns is inevitable. If this happens and you realize it in the moment, **just say “Oops!” or “Sorry!” and then repeat what you said but with the correct pronouns**. If you realize it after the fact, it’s okay to go to the person and apologize or email them saying something like this, “I just realized I used the wrong pronouns. Sorry!” Also, please refrain from loudly and excessively apologizing! Though you may mean well, it often draws a lot of unnecessary attention to the person being misgendered and that is often embarrassing and anxiety inducing. If you want the person to know

you're giving it your best, be intentional about getting their name and pronouns right the next time around. After all, the best apology is changed behavior.

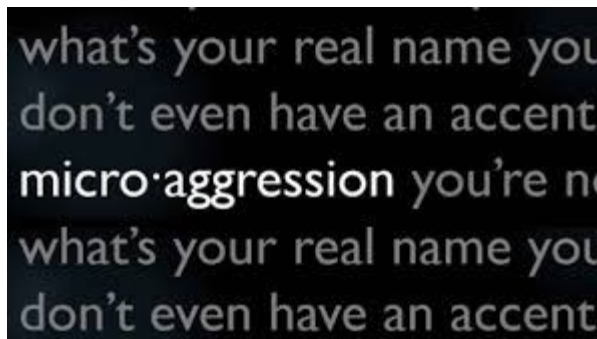
Phew! That was a lot of information! And there is so much more to learn! As you can see, creating a gender inclusive workplace is as much unlearning as it is learning. It isn't always easy, but just like learning a new computer system or a new language the more people around you learning it too, the faster and easier it is for everyone.



## LET'S TALK ABOUT MICROAGGRESSIONS

By Jen Midkiff

Live and learn. We've heard this expression throughout our lives, likely from people who were older and who had 'lived and learned' more than we had at that time and who were encouraging us to take the 'mistake' or 'faux pas' that we had made, examine it, and grow from the experience. It may sound cliché, but it is a powerful concept. We can apply this examination and growth mindset to our relationships at work and the very culture of our workplace.



Our workplace is rich with different generations, diversified ethnic demographics, and changing gender norms, and the more we acknowledge how people may be affected by our words and actions the more we are able to make space for people to be themselves. Words and actions that once seemed commonplace to us may be rooted in misinformation and stereotypes. As we focus not on our intent but rather our impact – how what we say and do actually affects others – we support marginalized people from having to conform to dominant culture thinking and perspectives. Maya Angelo said, "I did then what I knew how to do. When I knew better, I did better." How then do we 'live and learn' in this context? Know better and do better? One important way is to understand, recognize, and stop microaggressions in the workplace.

The [Anti-Defamation League](#) defines microaggressions as the following:

The everyday slights, indignities, put-downs, and insults that people of color, women, LGBTQ populations and other marginalized people experience in their day-to-day interactions. Microaggressions can appear to be compliments but often contain a 'meta-communication' or hidden insult to the target group. Microaggressions are often outside the level of conscious awareness of the people who say them, which means they can be unintentional. Microaggressions may be communicated verbally and/or nonverbally.

### Learning Objective:

Use this resource to learn more about microaggressions, how they show up in the workplace, the harm they create, and how we can interrupt them. It only takes 21 days to make a habit and 90 days for long-term behavior shifts. Together, we can make the pivot to address microaggressions in the work place.

According to [Derald Wing Sue](#), professor of counseling psychology at Columbia University and well-known [scholar](#) on microaggressions, they show up in [three forms](#):

- ✘ **Microassault:** an explicit racial derogation; verbal/nonverbal; e.g. name-calling, avoidant behavior, purposeful discriminatory actions.
- ✘ **Microinsult:** communications that convey rudeness and insensitivity and demean a person's racial heritage or identity; subtle snubs; unknown to the perpetrator; hidden insulting message to the recipient.
- ✘ **Microinvalidation:** communications that exclude, negate, or nullify the psychological thoughts, feelings, or experiential reality of a person belonging to a particular group.

Anna Giraldo-Kerr in her article [6 Things to Learn about Microaggressions](#), puts it this way when examining our own biases that fuel microaggressions, "We cannot make biases disappear. Our unconscious biases play a significant role in how we process our assumptions, interact with others, and, ultimately, communicate microaggressions. We can manage microaggressions by becoming aware of them, and slowly learning to catch our biases before they become actions."

Sounds like she may be talking about 'living and learning.' Really tuning in to what our own biases may be, examining our own behaviors and, yes, our own 'truth' about people and challenging what we think we 'know.' The following resources and activities provide more insights into microaggressions, what they are, how they impact people, why it is important to recognize and stop their use, and ways in which we can respond to one another when they occur.

## Resources:

[Microaggressions Are a Big Deal: How to Talk Them Out and When to Walk Away](#)

*NPR*  
(21-minute listen or 4 minute read)

[How to Respond to Microaggressions](#)

*New York Times*  
(4-minute read)

[Why Microaggressions Aren't So Micro](#)

(15:16 minute video)

[How to Outsmart Your Own](#)

[Unconscious Bias](#)  
(17:23 minute video)



## THE POWER OF LANGUAGE

By A.J. Kam (they/them)

Language can be so powerful it drives wedges in many relationships. Let's explore why this is and what it can teach us about the power of language. Language is connected to more than what seems to be in front of us. Our brains "wake up" the memories we have that are connected to the language we see or hear so we can make meaning of them. In other words, we make sense of language based on our experiences. In college, I learned that some people's experiences were not only different but the complete opposite of mine. So, how do we have conversations about topics that involve socially powerful language? As I'm sure you can imagine, there's not enough space on this paper to give you everything you need to know, but we can start with a few concepts that'll help you leave those conversations with a greater understanding of other people's perspectives.

### Impact over Intent

The message here is that we are responsible for our impact regardless of our intentions. For example, if I turn the corner and hit you with my car, it doesn't matter if it was raining hard, there was ice on the road, a tree was blocking my sight, I swerved out of the way of hitting another person or number of other things that define an accident. I still hit you with my car!!! Yes, I didn't do it on purpose and maybe I even had a good reason for swerving, regardless, I have to take responsibility for hitting you. Although my intention may be good, whether or not I mean for it to, it had a negative impact.

### Learning Objective:

*Use this resource to learn more about how the language we use impacts others, how that shows up in the workplace, and how we can shift to using inclusive language that creates space for everyone.*

### Reference:

*35 Dumb Things Well Intended People Say by Dr. Maura Cullen*

### Resources:

[How words shape people, culture stanford.edu](https://www.stanford.edu)  
(5-minute read)

[The power of language | Camila & Cecilia Lopez Jordan](https://www.ted.com/talks/camila-lopez-jordan-the-power-of-language)  
TEDxYouth@Miami  
(6-minute watch)

[Language and the Brain](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=...)  
(2-minute watch)

Statement	What Some People Hear	What Others Hear
Defund the police	We don't trust police, all police are bad, we want them to go away and take their entire budget away.	Police are overburdened with situations they are not equipped to handle, they need better training, and the community needs better resources for mental health. Reallocating budget to train and support police in these areas will better serve communities.
<u>One ODOT</u>	Building trusting and collaborative relationships, assuming positive intent, listening with empathy, encourage new points of view, embracing different communication styles, inspiring one another, helping others to grow and understand their value, growing from our lessons learned, celebrating successes, encourage new points of view, embodying ODOT's mission and values.	One ODOT can be a way to get what I need when my budget falls short and I need support from others to accomplish my departmental goals. This is a moment when I am being demanded or mandated to compromise.
I don't see color	I am not racist, I treat everyone just the same regardless of their race or ethnic origin, I appreciate all people.	You don't see me, the burdens I carry, the beauty of my culture, the valuable attributes and valuable life experiences I bring to the work environment.
Merry Christmas	We share similar views or values. They excited like me to celebrate the most wonderful time of the year! Woo hoo! Bring on the decorations and celebration!	You should believe or acknowledge the religious aspects of Christmas. I hear Happy Holidays.
I have worked at ODOT for 30 years	They have a lot of valuable knowledge. I can learn so much from them. They can share with me a perspective on past decisions or actions that can help me to have better understanding of this project, program, or community or business partnership and understand how past actions are impacting the present.	They are going to have a tough time with the innovations and technological advances we are making. They are probably going to slow us down by going through historical information that doesn't matter anymore.

**Pile on Principle**

This is when someone has had multiple negative experiences and it “piles up” so much so that it appears they’re overreacting. It’s kind of like when you’ve had a really bad day at work, come home, see the dishes, and have a meltdown. Is it an overreaction? Sure, if it was just because of the dishes... but probably not if you take into account all of what led up to it. This is helpful to keep in mind when

you're having a challenging conversation. The purpose of introducing the pile on principle isn't to justify someone taking everything out on you- it's not okay, especially at work. The point is to help you understand it's about a lot more than the one thing you said. Even though it might seem like a personal attack, it's an expression of frustration at the larger issue. It's not just about one comment or action alone. It's the accumulation of frustration that comes from many experiences.

### **Explain Away**

This is when someone attempts to explain away the problem and is particularly relevant if someone is telling you they've been mistreated because of their identity. It can be very tempting to explain why you think it's not related to their identity, to ask questions to figure out if it's really about their identity, or to try to solve the problem by offering advice. Though your intentions may be good, it often leaves the person feeling invalidated. The best thing you can do in this situation is just acknowledge their feelings. "That sounds really frustrating," "I can't imagine how that must have felt," "Are you okay?" are all ways of doing so. You don't have to agree with someone to acknowledge their feelings, the goal here is to make them feel heard. Unless they've asked for it, it's best not to question the situation, give your input, or offer advice. If you're absolutely dying to say something, just ask. "Would you like my perspective?" "Can I ask a potentially annoying question?" "Would you like my advice?" and if they say no, respect it.

These points can be applied to many things and all people. Think of the last time you hurt someone on accident - did you take responsibility for the impact? How about the last time you told someone they were overreacting- were you open to the amount of times they what they were reacting to? What about a time someone came to you for support and left upset - did you try to explain away the problem? These concepts arise in everyday situations and the more you practice identifying them, the easier it'll be to use them.

## LANGUAGE AND SERVICE AT ODOT

By A.J. Kam (they/them)

In my experience, communicating with people who don't speak English has led to some intense moments of frustration and embarrassment. I can only imagine how challenging it would be to manage those emotions when the exchange of information is constrained by time and is about something important like obtaining a driver's license, finding a detour, or explaining eminent domain. In many situations communicating across languages or even mediums (e.g., written, spoken), the way we are most comfortable communicating tends to be less effective. It's really easy to give up, but doing that at ODOT would not uphold our values of equity, excellence, and unity. Since it is our responsibility to serve all Oregonians and many have Limited English Proficiency (LEP), it's important for us to prepare to communicate across languages.

In reflecting upon my own experiences with language challenges, I realized the times I was most successful at accomplishing the goal of the conversation especially if I was getting frustrated was when I slowed myself down, took a deep breath, and reminded myself the other person was doing their best to communicate with me too. It took a lot of challenging experiences, but I eventually realized the key thing preventing me from communicating was making the unfair assumption the other person wasn't trying. Based on my work in diversity, equity, and inclusion, it's become clear to me that most situations where both people leave unsatisfied are a result of one or both people making unfair assumptions about each other. Although we can't control our customers' assumptions, we can work to ensure our assumptions aren't the ones preventing them from receiving the service they have a right to. Let's unpack some common assumptions about English Language Learners (ELLs), challenge them, and explore some ways we can communicate effectively across languages.

### Section 1. Assumptions

✘ **Assumption 1: They aren't trying to learn English.** To challenge this assumption, ask the question: How do you know? Quick moment of transparency- I took two years of Turkish, spent 6 months studying in Turkey, am still practicing Turkish on a phone app (thanks Duo Lingo), and if I had to get a driver's license in Turkish I would be very lost. It would be unfair for someone to assume I wasn't trying to learn Turkish when the reality is I just don't have the vocabulary I need to obtain a driver's license! And if I'm going to have to communicate in English to get it anyway, I may as well start by speaking in English so they know the challenge up front. If you find yourself worrying about whether someone is trying to learn the language (and I am totally guilty of this), it might be helpful to ask yourself if figuring that out is going to help you achieve the goal of the interaction. Most likely, knowing whether or not

#### Learning Objective:

*Use this resource to dispel misconceptions about people who speak different languages. Using the techniques and technology, you will learn how to communicate more effectively with others who speak a different language than you.*

the person is trying to learn English isn't going to get you closer to providing the service they're there for. Also, keep in mind English is not a requirement to be served at ODOT. In the event that a customer or coworker implies the ELL customer is stubborn (which can look like them saying, "Learn the Language!" or "Speak English!") you can remind them of that by politely saying ODOT is committed to serving all Oregonians including those who do not speak English and that it is your honor to serve them.

- ✘ **Assumption 2: They're illegal.** This might not be your assumption but it is certainly one that comes up so let's explore it. First off, a person cannot be illegal. That statement is both incorrect and dehumanizing. Using dehumanizing language leads people (including ourselves) to believe those in question aren't deserving of respect. Dehumanizing language promotes emotional hostility, aggressive reactions, and is disrespectful and inappropriate so please refrain from using this language or any form of dehumanizing language and discourage it if you hear it from anyone. The humanizing terms to describe someone who is undocumented, is simply 'a person who is undocumented,' or 'an undocumented person'. You can remind the person it is not necessary for you to know whether or not your customer is undocumented to provide them the service they are there for. If you feel it will be helpful, you can also explain the content in this paragraph so they and others listening can learn why this label is harmful. A lot of people aren't aware that dehumanizing language has been the starting point for many atrocities they wouldn't hesitate to denounce so if you engage, it's best to approach assuming they don't know that.
- ✘ **Assumption 3: They can't read the room/don't understand what's going on.** Because your customer cannot speak English fluently, they are likely using other cues to read the situation. These cues are usually related to body language so use it to reinforce what you're saying by putting a little extra emphasis on behaviors that show interest, patience, and kindness. Recall that emotions are universal and expressed in similar ways across cultures. At the same time, be aware of your personal space and their personal space too. Maintain a few feet in the distance and allow them to move closer to you if they want. Personal space and physical touch are often different across cultures so it's best to be safe.
- ✘ **Assumption 4: They can't hear you.** Unfortunately, people tend to speak louder when someone doesn't speak their language. It's a really common mistake that draws unnecessary attention often embarrassing the other person and doesn't help unless you were mumbling, they are hard of hearing, or the environment is noisy! Instead, speak clearer- slow down, enunciate each word, and use plain language.
- ✘ **Assumption 5: If they nod or say okay, they understand you.** For Christmas, several members of my extended family stayed at my house and none were fluent in English. A week in, I got frustrated and complained to my mom about my cousin nodding his head and then doing the exact opposite of what I just said! She agreed and was frustrated about the same thing. Later that evening

we caught each other doing exactly that when our Spanish speaking family was talking to us.... talk about hypocritical! I asked myself why I was doing that and realized it was because I wanted them to know I was paying attention and trying to understand them. Evidently, nodding and saying okay are not good ways to confirm someone who doesn't speak your language got your message. What consistently worked for us was delivering one piece of information at a time and ask them to communicate it back to us before we moved on. Doing those two things will probably give you the best chance at ensuring your customer has all the information they need.

## Section 2: Strategies

Okay, all of those are great, but if they STILL can't understand what you're saying and there are no translators available, then what do you do? Well, lucky for us, spoken language is not the only effective way to communicate. Have you ever played Pictionary or Charades? Language is not a barrier if you got the moves! \*cue back up dancers\*

- ✘ **Use Visuals.** If you have an example of what you're talking about, show it! Otherwise, try drawing it out or searching it on google images. Birth certificates look different in every country but a piece of paper with small footprints, a baby bottle, and a signature might get the message across regardless of the language.
- ✘ **Act it out.** Things like car crashes, crossing a bridge, getting on an airplane, potholes, road closures, and ramps can be acted out using your arms and hands. It seems silly but if you have a good attitude about it, it can lead to some great moments of fun and laughter while achieving the goal of the interaction! Though this can effectively get the message across, keep in mind that people have differing levels of comfort. Do your best to gauge the person's level of comfort, and for the most part, try not to make a scene especially if there are others around. Also, body language is a major form of communication so if you can use it to reinforce what you mean, go for it.
- ✘ **Write it down.** It might be the case that the person can't understand what you're saying but can read the words!
- ✘ **Use a translation tool.** Hello google translate! While google translate does make mistakes, it can often be enough to get the point across. To improve your chances of accuracy, use simple sentences and questions. If you're communicating with someone over the phone you can click the volume button under the translation and it Google will say it out loud. Use it to translate what you're trying to communicate using simple sentences. If you think there has been miscommunication, you can check the translation by translating the translation back into English.

- ✘ **If the person does not understand English, attempt to pronounce the words to the best of your ability in their language.** Your first shot should be using something like google translate that will say it for you, but if that is not available then try saying the sentence in their language. You will probably not pronounce it correctly but it is more likely that they will be able to figure out what you're trying to say than if you continue to repeat something in a language they have little to no familiarity with.

### Section 3: Preparation

**Those are all things we can do in the moment,** but if we prepare in advance it will likely save our customers and us a lot of time and energy. We can do this by asking ourselves the following questions: What would I do if someone who only spoke [insert language] is seeking services from me? How will I either provide the service or explain that I can't help them and who can? In addition to that, here are some questions we encourage you to find the answers to in the context of your role. When and how should language translation be happening? What tools are available to you and in what languages? If you haven't used it before, check it out so that you are not sending a person who is already facing a service barrier with another barrier.

Also, don't forget that no one should be translating for free! Do you know how to access those who are being paid a differential to translate? What are the gaps-where is it not happening but needs to be? Who needs to be made aware of the gap so that a solution can be found? How can you make that person or people aware in a constructive manner? Remember, as recipients of federal funds, we are responsible for ensuring that people with Limited English Proficiency (LEP) have meaningful language assistance regardless of the language they speak.

Given that sometimes processes can be inconsistent or slow, if you know you're going to be frequently interacting with people across multiple languages, work with others in similar roles and create resources that can help you communicate. I've started one that contains some common phrases in Spanish, Vietnamese, and Mandarin called, "ELL Cheat Sheet" which you can find on the social equity resources page and I strongly encourage you to expand on it and make other resources as a team (see team activity below). There very well might be some ways your colleagues communicate effectively across languages that you (and I) haven't thought of yet!

If you've exhausted your options and can't find a solution, apologize for any inconvenience or frustration your customer may have experienced. Simply knowing that someone understands your frustration can bring a sense of comfort even if the problem hasn't been solved. Remember the person you're interacting with is connected to other people and it's important that they speak highly of ODOT.

## SHAME, GUILT, RESILIENCE

By A.J. Kam (they/them)

You might be thinking “Shame? Guilt? Resilience? What does this have to do with social equity?” For many people, the connection is made when their privilege shows up. Remember privileges are *unearned* advantages due to society’s assumptions based on our identities\*. So, you can experience struggle, work hard, or even be targeted in some ways and still experience privilege based on your identity. Which privileged identities do you have? Recall a time someone pointed out something that never occurred to you because of your identity. For example, maybe a coworker told you the reason they always have an excuse for not joining in team lunch outings is because they can’t afford it. Maybe a coworker told you the reason he never brings a date to after work gatherings is because he has a boyfriend and is afraid to bring him. Maybe an older friend of yours really wants to leave their job but can’t find new employment.

Learning about injustices, barriers, and burdens people face because of an identity usually brings up unsettling feelings. And you guessed it, many times, it’s guilt or shame. As we engage in social equity as an agency, knowing how to identify and work through guilt and shame is helpful. Let’s start by understanding them and figure out the roles they play in us.

Guilt and shame are two different emotions and only one of these is an effective social justice tool. In a 2004 paper on [Shame Resilience Theory](#) by Brené Brown, using the 215 research participants’ descriptions of shame, she concluded that shame is, “an intensely painful feeling or experience of believing we are flawed and therefore unworthy of acceptance and belonging.” In her popular podcast, [“Unlocking Us”](#) she explains that shame is NOT an effective social justice tool- it is a tool of oppression. Why? Because people cannot be shamed into doing better. Shame is the feeling that tells us we are flawed and therefore do not have the capacity to change.

Shame	Guilt
Feel bad about who we are	Feel bad about what we’ve done
Feel distress and impairment	Fell tension and remorse
Blame your discomfort on others	Take responsibility for your discomfort
Leads to impairment and inaction	Can lead to meaningful change
Avoid, withdraw, retreat, escape	Examine, confront, address, change
Hiding the issue	Working through the issue

Before we get too far, I want to be really clear about something... feeling shame does not necessarily mean that you were shamed. Very rarely are people with privileged identities shamed by those with marginalized identities. Think about it. How often have you heard, “You should be ashamed for being [a man, straight,

### Learning Objective:

*This document provides strategies and information to develop resilience when working through the tough emotions of guilt and shame.*



rich, white, young, able bodied, insert other privileged identity here!]" My guess? Probably not often because it's *what you do* (or don't do), not who you are that tends to be the issue. Why is it, then, that when we're confronted about our privilege, we feel shame? Because shame is the fear of disconnection. And shame leads us to inaction which is always easier than taking action.

Guilt, on the other hand, has the potential to lead to dialogue, transformative relationships, or even change. While shame is, "I'm a bad person," guilt is, "I did a bad thing." Holding ourselves and others accountable for the things we do, especially when it results in burdening people based on their identity is an important part of equity work. In equity work getting it wrong is guaranteed and taking responsibility for our impact can be uncomfortable while a necessary part of our growth.

This is where resilience comes into play. Learning resilience is also essential and fortunately, it can empower us to emerge more confident and courageous people. According to the American Psychological Association, psychologists define resilience as, "the process of adapting well in the face of adversity, trauma, tragedy, threats, or significant sources of stress." In essence, it is the ability to "bounce back" after experiencing difficulty or, in our case, guilt, or shame. So what are some things we can do to develop resilience?

1. **Recognize and accept that you are someone who is capable of being hurt.**  
**We** can easily feel taken off guard and get overwhelmed. Acknowledging what is happening and why helps us center ourselves through a situation. Remember, it is your job to work through your own emotions. Others can support you, but they cannot do the work. Relying on people with marginalized identities to help you work through guilt and shame around the injustices they face is asking them to do the work of the privileged party.
2. **Critically assess how your experience relates to the social forces that have shaped you.**  
 This often involves closely examining the situation, taking it apart, and putting it back together in the social context. Remember, you are fighting a large issue so recognizing that society as a whole has this issue rather than just you as an individual is a more promising way to address it. Once we acknowledge the ways society teaches us, we can understand impact, compare it to our intentions, and even unlearn behaviors.
3. **Reach out for support from empathetic people who care about your growth.**  
 You cannot effectively do equity work alone. Building a support network of people who have had shared experiences will help you break down the idea that only you are having these struggles. Lean on your support network for

## Resources:

### [Brené on Shame and Accountability](#)

Brené Brown  
[brenebrown.com](http://brenebrown.com)  
 (45-minute listen)

(4-minute excerpt)  
 19:05-22:50  
*Shame is not an effective social justice tool*

(10-minute excerpt)  
 22:58-32:10  
*Brené addresses white people and shares her strategies for being held accountable for racism*

### [Guilt](#)

*Psychology Today*

### [Five Science-Backed Strategies to Build Resilience](#)

[berkeley.edu](http://berkeley.edu)  
 (10-minute read)

### [What Makes Some People More Resilient Than Others](#)

*The New York Times*  
[nytimes.com](http://nytimes.com)  
 (15-minute read)

### [Building your resilience](#) ([apa.org](http://apa.org))

(5-minute read)

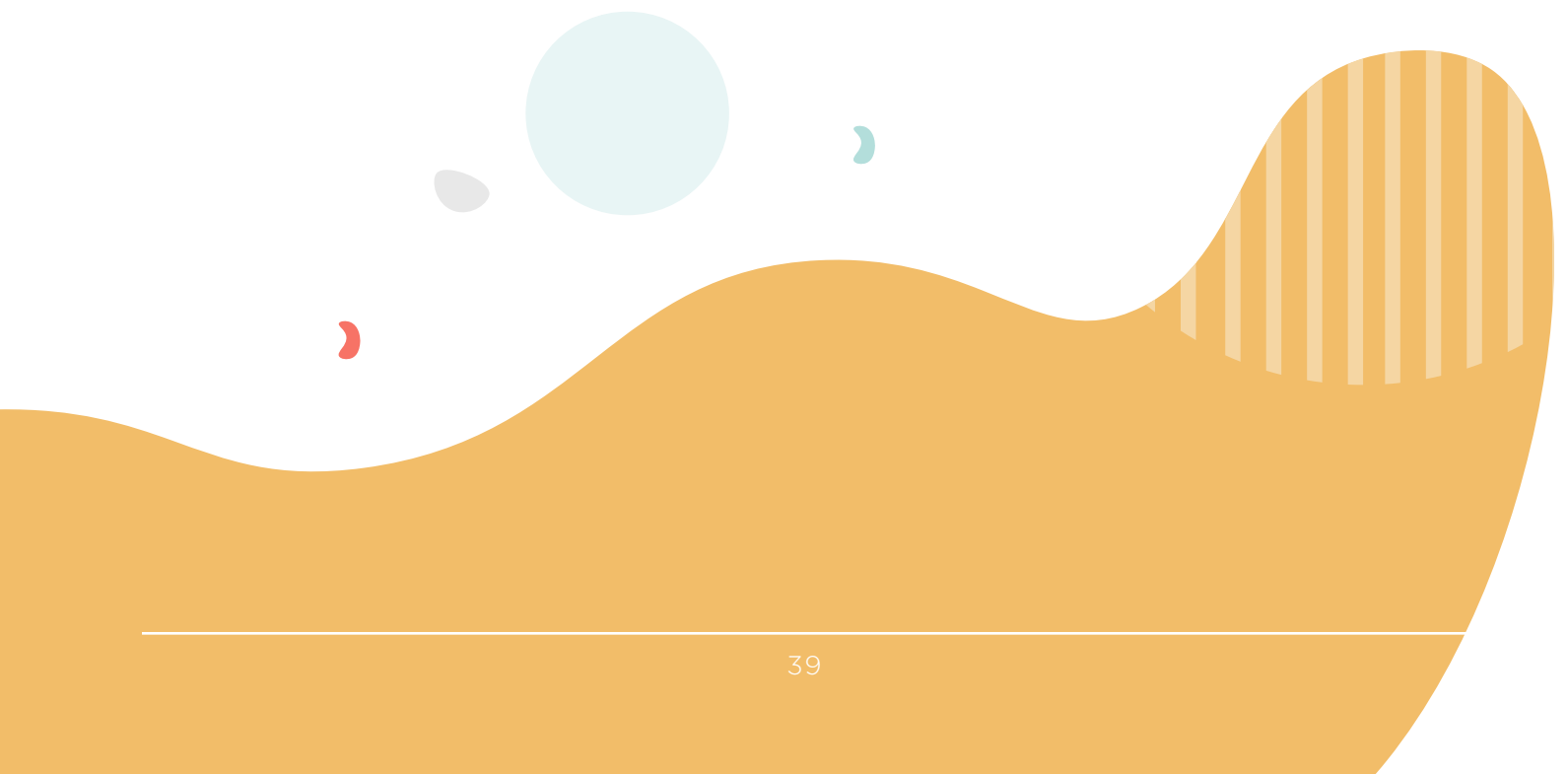
### [Resilience](#)

*Psychology Today*  
 (10-minute read)

tools and strategies to help you work through emotional distress- and make yourself available for them when they need you too.

4. **Talk about your emotions in detail with accuracy.**

This takes a lot of practice and some research, but it is well worth the investment. Learn the words, definitions, and concepts that describe how you feel. Try to pinpoint, describe, and understand your emotions. Then discuss it with others. Most negative emotions gain power in secrecy and do not stand a chance when in front of those who care about and feel with us.



## INTERRUPTING HARM

By A.J. Kam (they/them)

Take a moment to think about all the things we went through in 2020...most significant wildfires in Oregon's history, making masks a part of our wardrobes, figuring out how work safely during a pandemic, reckoning with racial oppression, quarantining, celebrating holidays, graduations, birthdays etc. without our loved ones. Geez! Did 2020 require some serious resilience from us or what? The pandemic is still present, wildfire recovery is complex and urgent, racism is still pervasive throughout our society, etc.

Let's think about how all of the realities above impact our equity resilience, that is, our ability to adapt well in the face of adversity, trauma, tragedy, threats, or significant sources of stress related to equity. According to the [Harvard Business Review](#), the more exposure we have to those things, the more resilient we become. And so it follows, the more experiences we have with the conversations and interactions about equity that require some serious uncertainty, risk, and emotional exposure the more resilient we become. If you are anything like me, your gut reaction is "UHHH... nope! I'll pass on that one!" Personally, I love a workday that involves little uncertainty, minimum risk, and zero emotional exposure. Here is the thing though, if we want to achieve equity in our outcomes, all of those things are necessary. The hard conversations and interactions with people who push back on our thoughts, values, and beliefs- especially the ones around identity- are the ones that will result in a more equitable society. A more equitable ODOT. We have to find the courage to say, "Hey, I know you're not trying to be mean, but when you tell jokes like that, I feel alienated and I'd really like you to stop," or "I know we just got good at following this process, but the data is showing it's leading to disproportionate effects on people with low incomes. Can we work together to figure out a different approach?"

Being on either side of that conversation is tough and everyone involved has to practice resilience. Each one of us will have trouble, but if it is done well, everyone can emerge stronger. So what can we do to increase the chances that these moments are ones of constructive discomfort? Here are some practical tips for having tough conversations and ultimately building resilience.

1. **Decrease defensive language.** Defensive language creates a hostile environment because it evokes a fight or flight response. It also fuels distrust and prevents collaboration. Here are some tangible ways to decrease defensiveness. Additional resources for decreasing defensiveness are in the resource section at the end of this document.
  - a. **Use "I" statements instead of "you" statements.** For example, "Why don't you ever listen to me?" vs. "I feel unheard" or "You're giving me too many

### Learning Objectives:

Use the information and techniques offered in this tool to interrupt harmful language or behavior during hard conversations.

assignments." vs. "I feel overwhelmed and would appreciate some extra help."

- b. **Make a specific behavioral request.** This indicates interest in solving the problem rather than holding a grudge or complaining.
  - c. **State observations rather than accusations.** "I noticed the report is missing" vs. "You didn't send me the report" or "I see you're wringing your hands" vs. "Why are you getting so angry?"
  - d. **Notice how your body is reacting to the situation.** Being aware of and acknowledging changes in your body especially during a tough conversation can bring a level of awareness to your emotional state and help you center yourself. Try the body scan activity below.
2. **Be willing to unlearn.** Unlearning is the deliberate discarding of information. In my experience, during hard conversations where my core beliefs and values are challenged, I remind myself that in order to "try on" new information, I have to "take off" the information I have already got on. It is kind of like trying on new shirt- I'll never know if a new shirt fits me well if I don't take off the one I am already wearing. In addition, just like trying on new clothing, it often takes a little bit of moving around in it to get comfortable and see if it really fits. So give it a shot! Worst case scenario, if it is too big or small right now, take it off until you're ready to try it on again. Remember, resilience is about being flexible and adaptable.
  3. **When someone says something that rattles you, take a deep break, and ask for more information.** For example, being called racist, having your religious beliefs questioned, or being confronted with something that sounds way off is often rattling and unpleasant. Here's some specific language to use in those situations:
    - a. Can you explain that in some more detail please?
    - b. Can you please expand on that?
    - c. Say more.
    - d. I don't understand. Could you please clarify?
  4. **Listen as hard as you want to be heard.** That means listening as intensely to them as we want them to listen to us. If we want someone to listen to our opinion on the usefulness of protests, we have to be willing to hear their opinion too. Please note! If you're planning what to say while they are talking, you're not truly listening. If that happens though, don't worry; just politely ask them to repeat it. For instance, say, "Sorry, could you please repeat that? I got caught on something you said and got sidetracked, but I really want to understand where you're coming from."

5. **Don't have the conversation if you don't have the energy to have it.** In my experience, having a hard conversation without the emotional energy to be empathetic, compassionate, and kind, leaves me exhausted and unenthusiastic about having another one. Here's what I recommend saying to buy needed time:
- a. "I want hear more about your perspective on that but I can't right now. Can we revisit?"
  - b. "I'm glad you feel comfortable sharing your opinion with me, but unfortunately I'm not in a space to have a conversation about this right now. Maybe another time?"

While these strategies can help engage us in constructive discomfort, keep in mind that while we can influence the language and behavior of those in the conversation by choosing our words carefully, keeping an even tone, and practicing empathy, that doesn't mean we're immune to feelings like guilt and shame.

## EMPATHY CULTURE

By Lisa Brown & Jen Midkiff

Merriam Webster defines empathy as the ability to understand or share the feelings of another. This can happen when we look at a situation or circumstance from a viewpoint other than our own and being open to genuinely imagining what it would be like to experience that situation firsthand. When we strengthen our ability to empathize, it can enhance relationships with our ODOT family and the communities we serve. People are facing different circumstances given their job responsibilities and personal situations. Equity and empathy are paramount in our service at ODOT.

When I was 20, one of my closest friends, Mike, was killed by a drunk driver in an auto collision. He also happened to be the fiancé of my best friend. I was with her in the moments after she found out and went to her house to check in on her every day for the next year as she adjusted to a new normal without him. Sometimes she needed me to listen and share in her tears, and sometimes she needed me to sit in silence and feel the pain that lived in her silence. We have continued to show up for each other and express our mutual empathy over the years, and we remain best friends. Over 25 years of friendship later, I believe our bond remains so strong because we continue to choose to be vulnerable and empathetic as we sit in each other's joy and pain. Every work or personal relationship where I experience close bonds, my teammates, friends, or family regularly expresses empathy. We trust each other to get down in the trenches in challenging times, and we celebrate each other's successes when things are going well.

At ODOT, I have seen and experienced being on teams with deep bonds. On those teams, we, too, have shared each other's joy and pain. When I think about what happened to my friend Mike, I also think about the transportation and emergency workers who arrived on the scene and the trauma they experience by seeing injuries and fatalities on accident scenes day in and day out. Dedicated Incident Responders and Transportation Maintenance Specialists can be the first to arrive on the scene of a collision. Their actions on the scene provide support and involve deep empathy with other emergency workers, their peers, and those impacted. That empathy doesn't just end at the scene of the incident. Many of these same



### Learning Objective:

*This document demonstrates how we use expressions of empathy in the workplace to strengthen relationships, and create a supportive and psychologically safe work environment.*

### Resources:

[Making Empathy Culture Strong in your Company Culture](#)

Harvard Business Review

[Sometimes You're A Caterpillar](#)  
Chescaleigh

[Empathy](#)  
Brené Brown

employees serve on the ODOT Peer Support Team to help other ODOT employees process trauma.

Research shows that empathetic workplaces have stronger collaborations, less stress, high morale, and quickly bounce back from challenges. Whether you are a Dedicated Incident Responder or a Fiscal Analyst at ODOT, we can all express empathy on our teams. It might show up at work by supporting a coworker through losing a loved one, or teammate who is navigating a transition that aligns with their gender identity, a serious medical issue they or their family member is experiencing, facing microaggressions at work like when people make comments to BIPOC employees like “wow I’m surprised by how articulately you speak”, or experiences of sexism where women may be called aggressive instead of assertive or even too sensitive. Those are ALL moments that can be met with empathy from our coworkers. And, it doesn’t always have to be about going through the tough times with your co-workers. It can be the way you support them in their successes too. Brené Brown helps us to understand how empathy drives connection and sympathy drives disconnection. Having genuine empathic connections with people means we have to get in touch with our own vulnerabilities and fears. Empathy helps us to come together in authentic ways. To learn more about empathy, check out the resources on the previous page.

## HOW TO THINK, NOT WHAT TO THINK

By Lisa Brown

If I told you that flying dinosaurs were taking over the earth and acid raindrops were melting people's faces off, you just might question what I am saying. However, sometimes, we hear or read things and the distinction between true and untrue are unclear. So, how do we stop taking things at face value, holding onto our own perspectives, or going along with a team's perspective to maintain harmony? What do we lose when we don't do a critical assessment? How do we pick out what is true and what isn't? We are all susceptible to bias and can be fooled by information that is more veiled. To see beyond the veil, we must learn to pick out flaws in our own reasoning and this requires critical thinking. We have to train our brains to be skilled in this area because untruths aren't always obvious. A big part of critical thinking is learning how to think, not what to think.

Think about a time when you were certain about something and you ended up being wrong. Recently, I told my mom she did not bring back a tape measure she borrowed. I was certain she still had it and there was no telling me otherwise. I looked in the place I normally keep it and like magic, it was there. So, not only did I have it, but it was where it belonged. Now, this type of error is easy to correct, admit my error, and apologize to my mom. I would even be willing to let her tease me for years to come if she wanted to. Before I "found" the tape measure, I was so dug into my own ideas that I was not willing to consider the possibility that I already had it. Sometimes we get in our own way when assessing situations because it's hard to consider we could be wrong.

Most of us are rock stars at challenging others but when we turn that mirror towards ourselves and it's not so easy. Noticing when we're wrong helps us to become aware of our own thinking. Being willing to ask ourselves questions like, how did I come to this conclusion? What information didn't I consider before? What about my thinking was flawed? Now that I know new information, what do I think? And, who could be harmed if I don't shift gears? We are a large organization of innovators that solve problems for complex situations. To excel in our work, we have to be willing to find objective truths (the things that are true whether we believe them or not). It is important to realize that we can hold ideas for moments, days, months, or years AND we all still have the ability to change our minds when we seek to learn something new. Making perspective shifts demonstrates our skill as critical thinkers and problem solvers. Being open to different ideas promotes a more creative work environment and helps us to be more inclusive.

My mom has this saying, "I'm not always right, I'm just never wrong." She always says it in a joking manner and I always feel like she means it at least a little bit. Can you imagine if we worked that way? What if instead of trying to prove ourselves right, we constantly tried to disprove ourselves and asked others to do the same?

### Learning Objective:

*Staying curious about your own and others' perspectives can help people to engage in conversations that support an innovative work environment. Use this tool to support you or your team in engaging in ways that examine many possibilities and help us to make more informed and better decisions.*

### Resource:

[How to think, not what to think](#)

Jesse Richardson  
(16-minute video)



Can you imagine how much growth we would have? When I “knew” I was right about the tape measure but I still looked for it, being curious, willing to explore, trying to prove myself wrong ended up being the solution. That sure didn’t turn out the way I had planned and I am glad it didn’t. It gave me the chance to be accountable, admit I was wrong, and correct my mistake. When we are open and encourage critical thinking on our teams, it gives us the chance to consider many sound options to choose from instead of a singular and possibly flawed option. Clearly, my tape measure perspective was flawed.

Shutting down others’ ideas stifles creative solutions. Ask questions to learn more about the perspectives of everyone on the team. Try exploring resources together so that everyone on the team can learn together. Working on teams where it’s okay to be wrong and have respectful dialogue about differing perspectives allows for continual growth. Stay curious when exploring your options, try examining your thoughts and resources, examining others’ thoughts and resources, and examining new thoughts and resources together. What might you learn from the process? Could it help your team be more innovative? Could it change your decision path? Might it help you to make better informed decisions? These are some of the benefits of approaching your work with the mindset of “How to Think, Not What to Think.”

## SHIFTING PERSPECTIVES

By Lisa Brown

How do we change our mind when we intuitively believe our own perspective? Perspective shifts don't happen overnight or without exploring new ideas. Things that we believed in the past, we know now to be untrue. Think about pregnancy and smoking. Many years ago, women were encouraged to smoke during pregnancy to keep weight gain to around 20 pounds. Today, we know that smoking during pregnancy has harmful side effects on both mother and baby. We can see the situation from a different perspective because we learned about the harmful effects of smoking from scientific studies. As a result, in 1984, the Surgeon General added a warning statement on every cigarette pack to let people know that smoking while pregnant may result in fetal injury, premature birth, and low birth weight. What barriers might we see in changing our mind?

Consider how our own views and experiences might be limiting our capacity to shift perspectives. We have all grown up with different life experiences that have shaped our beliefs. As a kid, I was told not to swallow my gum because it would be stuck in my guts for seven years. In reality, our digestive system easily breaks down gum and it takes about a week to digest. Until that idea was challenged and proven otherwise, kids were walking around thinking their guts could be full of gum if they swallowed it. This could be new information to you. That means you have the opportunity to change your mind based on what new information you have. When it comes to work, how do we come together to get on the same page and what does that look like?

We are an innovative agency that considers the impact of climate and social inequity on our communities. A part of that is seeking out energy innovations like solar and vehicle electrification that reduce our carbon footprint and the burdens to population-dense areas where emissions contribute to health risks (e.g. asthma, reduced lung capacity, increased susceptibility to respiratory illness or disease). Creating innovative solutions in climate requires us to value perspectives and information supported by science and data. Shifting perspectives is necessary to keep our agency and our communities thriving. When we are struggling to make a pivot, it's helpful to ask ourselves some questions like, "Why am I so attached to my perspective?" "Am I listening to what they are saying, or am I listening to respond?" It takes a willingness to temporarily suspend our own perspective to really listen. When we are listening to *truly* hear other perspectives, we begin to deepen our understanding.

Think about what steps you can take to strengthen your perspective shifting muscles. The goal is not to "win" the conversation, it's to learn more and grow. Try to learn about what is motivating their perspective. A lot of the time, our tendency to resist comes from our underlying concerns and our fears. Breaking

### Learning Objective:

*As the agency goes through transformative change, creating habits to shift our mental models is critical. We all only have our own set of life experiences; listening and considering the valuable input others have helps us expand our knowledge base and give everyone a seat at the table. Use this document as a guidepost to strengthening partnerships, creating better solutions, and improving outcomes.*

### Resource:

[Shift your perspective to grasp new opportunities](#)

*Bangkok Post, Arinya Talerngsri  
(5-minute read)*

down those concerns is an important part of the process. Ask yourself questions such as, “What is my view, and what is theirs?” “What is my underlying concern, and what is theirs?” “What does each of us want out of this partnership?” “What about my perspective and theirs can contribute to a positive outcome?” This helps build understanding and allows all people to come away knowing they are a part of the process and that their voice matters. Think about how you might use these techniques in your future conversations.

## SOCIAL EQUITY OPPORTUNITIES

### Differences and Assumptions

Making assumptions about other people's perspectives, beliefs, or actions can create our own false understandings. These false understandings might create a story in our heads about who they are, how they think, and what their intentions are. Instead of making assumptions, we can ask questions to build understanding. What did they hope to achieve? What information were they given to arrive at that decision? What is their understanding of this topic? What resources did they use to learn about it? Being curious instead of assuming allows us to learn more about others and develop insights into their perspectives.

### Power Dynamics

Power is not a bad thing: it's how we use and share it that can create positive or negative outcomes. We all yield some power, whether it's controlling when our pets eat or setting our children's curfew. Those are small examples of power and control. What happens when you control large organizations and your decisions deeply impact people's access to goods, services, transportation, education, health, employment, and housing? When power is used constructively, problems get solved, the overall needs and perspectives of the group are valued and met, positive relationships exist, and the balance of that power is shared on a team or by a community, not just held by the person in the top position or with decision making authority. When power is misused, the distribution and access to these things can quickly become inequitable. At ODOT, one of the biggest ways we can work to use and share our power in a positive way is by using a just distribution of the benefits and burdens of our transportation system through the way we distribute resources, power and opportunity in our communities. [Click here](#) to learn more about equity and distribution of the benefits and burdens of our transportation system.

### How We Talk vs. How We Write

Have you ever read something at work and thought, "Who really talks like this and what does that really even mean?" Let's take this a step further. If we are challenged in understanding some of our own content, how can we expect our business partners and community members to understand us? If we use terms that people don't relate to, we not only lose our audience, we create barriers for people accessing our services. By using terms that people use and understand, putting ourselves in the audience's shoes to consider what the audience will find helpful about the information, removing terms with implicit bias and following plain language guidelines, we can communicate in ways that better reach our intended audiences. This helps us to be more inclusive and improve our equity outcomes. [Click here](#) to learn more about increasing inclusivity through language at ODOT.

## People-First Language

This refers to putting the person before identities they hold. With regards to disability using language like 'person with a disability' or 'person experiencing a [disability](#)' is an expression of people-first language. Start with this method and if a person lets you know they identify in a different way, use the language they identify with. People-first language can be applied to many things. When attaching homelessness to people, a 'person or people experiencing homelessness,' or a 'person who is unhoused' are sound ways to refer to people. [Click here](#) for more examples of people-first language.

## Addressing People or Groups

"Ladies and gentlemen" is a box too small to fit us all. Using boy/girl is condescending when talking to adults. When speaking to people of color, calling adults boy or girl also has a historical connotation of being used as a microaggression, subtle racism and assertion of power. Guests, team, people, community members, colleagues, folks or folx, using people's names, and pronouns are all inclusive ways to address to people.

## Gender Neutral Conversations

Many of us have said something like, "see you guys later." When we use language that assigns gender in conversations, it is exclusive to people with that gender identity. To be more inclusive in your conversations, you could instead say, "See y'all later" or "see you folx later." When using this language, you are including everyone. Sometimes we assign genders to roles in society when we make assumptions about who serves in that job or role in society. Traditionally male roles like fireman, anchorman, doorman, and fisherman have a male assigned gender in the title. There are many people in these roles who do not identify as male. Instead of using gender exclusive terms, it's best to use gender-inclusive terms like fire fighter, newscaster, concierge, and fisher.

## Language That Minimizes Histories

Think about the word Nazi: now that is a powerful word. What comes to mind when you use this word? I think about terror, violence, and genocide inflicted on Jewish people under Hitler's rule. Images run through my mind of starving Jewish adults and children walking the streets of Germany from movies like *Schindler's List*, *The Diary of Anne Frank*, *The Book Thief*, and *The Boy in the Striped Pajamas*. A more recent language trend is using the word Nazi, or other terms like lynch mob, and applying them in everyday conversations. Saying things like, "There goes Bill being the timecard Nazi again. Better get it right, or else." This language implies a false comparison that Bill's review of timecards could somehow result in us suffering the same type of harm that was inflicted on Jewish people by Nazis. Misplaced comparisons diminish the tragedy that Jewish people experienced and

normalizes harmful use of language. It is important to be aware of how the impact of our words can create harm. Be thoughtful in your words and think about who might be harmed by what you say.

## Holiday Acknowledgment and Celebration

We have an official list of State of Oregon [recognized holidays](#). In 2021, through [House Bill 2168](#), Juneteenth was added in recognition and celebration of the day the last slaves were freed. 2022 will be the first year state employees will officially observe Juneteenth with time off. Celebrating holidays on our teams can be a good way for us to learn more about each other and our cultures. Sometimes we share holidays and cultural celebrations and sometimes we don't. One approach to this is to ask employees what holidays and cultural celebrations they would like to see acknowledged in the office. This could be done in a team's monthly team meeting by just asking the group if there are any holidays that people want to share they are celebrating at home that aren't a part of the State of Oregon recognized holidays. It could be that members of your team celebrate Easter, Winter Solstice, St. Patrick's Day, Kwanzaa, Bike to Work Day, Asian and Pacific Islander Day, Hanukkah, Noise Awareness Day, Africa Day, National Women's Day, Rohatsu, International Day for Persons with Disabilities, or Ramadan. Checking in on this each year to see if there are any changes is a good idea. It doesn't mean that we are throwing parties for holidays; it does mean that we are acknowledging and giving space for the holidays people celebrate. [Click here](#) to learn more about inclusive holiday celebrations at work.

## Meeting People Where They Are

Change is hard. Just because we make changes in our processes, policies and perspectives does not mean everyone is adopting those changes at the same pace we are. Forcing someone to shift at our trajectory just doesn't work. So how do we connect to people best? We meet them where they are at. Whether it is an internal change or a change that impacts our community, this involves going to them to listen, observe, and learn. We must ask questions to learn about their perspective, uncover their priorities, and learn about what motivates them. When we know more, we can understand how their past experiences have shaped how they show up in the change process. You may not be able to get the person to sprint in your direction, but that is not the goal. The goal is to engage their efforts in a way that doesn't feel like you are trying to "fix" them. Acknowledgment goes a long way. People notice when you genuinely care. When people start to take steps towards progress, let them know you appreciate their courage to work outside their comfort zone and celebrate their successes to keep the momentum going.

## **Harmful Words or Phrases to Avoid Using**

White Trash, Bible Thumper, Heathen, Here Comes Trouble, Illegals, Snowflake, Down Skippy Boy, lynch mob, Girl when talking to women, Boy when talking to men, nerd, geek, techie, data person, airhead, bimbo, dictator, cocky, sucker, big dawg, flunky, black sheep, bossy, shrill, handicapped, Type 'A' personality, or any other racial slurs or harmful terms.



# INDIVIDUAL ACTIVITIES

*This section provides individual activities that support employees in exploring and practicing social equity concepts.*

## OPPRESSION ACTIVITIES

### ✦ 15-Minute Activity

[Watch this video on power](#)

#### Reflection Questions:

1. What kind of power do you have or benefit from?
2. In thinking about “redistribution of power” being part of equity, how can we do that through our programs, projects, and policies at ODOT?

### ✦ 30-Minute Activity

#### Open Mind Reflection:

I have not met many people who do not consider themselves open minded. Instead of asking people are they open minded, I tend to ask what are you open to and why. I ask this because the reality is we are often only open to things we have been exposed to, but we close things off because we simply do not know about them. Our experiences shape our world, worldviews, perceptions, and often opinions, so what are our experiences?

#### Complete the Matrix:

1. Take a moment and fill out [the matrix](#) given to you. You will not be asked to share your answers; they are just to help you participate in the dialogue.

#### Dialogue Questions:

1. Most people don't bring this information into their consciousness. Were you surprised by your matrix?
2. Creating a sense of belonging means that we need to be able to make people feel like they can share, ask questions, or be wrong and still be part of the team. Are there people you have never noticed in a space? Sure, we're all human but we all experience different things sometimes even in the same space. Do people feel like they belong in your presence? What does your matrix tell you?
3. Where can your environment be enriched by more diverse groups? What would you need to do to make that happen?



## UNCONSCIOUS BIAS ACTIVITIES

### ✘ 5-Minute Activity

One common unconscious bias is associating men more with careers and women more with family. It is very common to ask female coworkers about their family more frequently than male coworkers. If this is something you find yourself doing, consider making it a habit to ask your male coworkers about their families more often. What can you do to normalize talking to everyone about their career AND families?

### ✘ 10-Minute Activity

Watch [this video](#) on addressing unconscious bias by McKinsey. What seems odd to you or unusual in this video? Why? Have you heard comments like these happen among your team, unit, crew etc.? If this isn't relevant because everyone on your team is of the same gender, reflect on why that may be the case, if people of all genders are capable of and doing the jobs in other spaces.

### ✘ 30-Minute Activity

Discretion Elimination: When decisions are made with discretion, it's common for them to end up producing burdens despite our intended benefits. When they are made with specific predetermined criteria and it's rigorously applied, the chances of inequity decreases. What decisions do you make that involve discretion? Examine a common one or one with significant impact on others. Spend the rest of the half hour drafting a rubric you can use and send it to a coworker for feedback on whether the criteria is clear, objective, specific, and will lead to a good decision.

## APPRECIATING ALL IDENTITIES ACTIVITY

### ✘ 5-Minute Activity

Consider this quote by Brené Brown on identity: "True belonging never asks us to change who we are, it demands that we be who we are." Reflect on its message in your own life and in your own responses to people with whom you work. Do you feel as if you have to change in order to belong? Do you expect others to change in order to belong? In thinking about your social identities, when have you had to change who you are to belong at work? How would you have liked people to advocate for you at those times?

## PSYCHOLOGICAL SAFETY ACTIVITY

### ✦ 20-Minute Activity

One of the easiest ways to interrupt others is to prepare. That preparation starts with understanding what you believe and why. Many people believe what they believe because it is what they were taught or have always thought. Below are some questions that you can reflect on one by one or all at once depending on the amount of time you have available at any given time. As you answer the questions, think about the effect the answers have on your work, your interactions with your coworkers, and how you serve Oregon.

Explore your experiences with and attitudes about difference by asking yourself these questions.

1. The first time I became aware of differences was when ...
2. As I was growing up, my parent(s) taught me that people who were different from us were...
3. As I was growing up, my parent(s) taught me that people who were like us were ...
4. A time I was mistreated because of my own difference was when ...
5. A time I mistreated someone for being different was when ...
6. I feel most comfortable when I am around people who ...
7. I feel least comfortable when I am around people who ...
8. The memories I have of differences affect my parenting by ...

## GENDER INCLUSION ACTIVITIES

### ✦ 5-Minute Activity

Check out [this website](#) to see some gender-neutral pronouns that have been introduced to the English language. "They" pronouns are the most common form of gender-neutral pronouns, but there are several others. Try to practice using a couple different ones.

### ✦ 10-Minute Activity

Do you know what transgender people's rights at work are? Read the "[Know Your Rights](#)" page put forth by the National Center for Transgender Equality to learn the answers to the following questions.

1. What constitutes harassment against transgender people?
2. What is the first thing NCTE recommends transgender people do if they someone discriminates against them?
3. What does Executive Order 13672 prohibit?

**✘ 30-Minute Activity**

Check out the pages and/or videos on [MyPronouns.org](https://www.mypronouns.org)

## MICROAGGRESSIONS ACTIVITY

**✘ 5-Minute Activity**

Read [Questions to Self-Reflect](#) from love has no labels. "Since implicit bias lives in our subconscious, it can be hard to spot. Sometimes, all we need is a moment to pause and reflect honestly on our thoughts and behaviors. These questions can help you recognize areas of bias and how they might affect relationships with others." How does bias show up in microaggressions? How do they manifest in the workplace? What can you do to better recognize your areas of bias and evaluate how they impact your relationships at work?

## THE POWER OF LANGUAGE ACTIVITIES

**✘ 5-Minute Activity**

Have you ever been told you can't say something because you don't have a certain identity? Does it kind of seem like a double standard for someone to call you out on something you said when you know they've said the exact same thing? [Check out this 2 minute video](#) by diversity expert Dr. Maura Cullen on in-group vs. out-group language.

**✘ 10-Minute Activity**

Impact over intention is the most important concept in this month's guidance. It's also the hardest one to come to terms with because there are many things people commonly say that land on people in ways they don't expect. [Check out this 5 minute 30 second video](#) by diversity expert Dr. Maura Cullen on a technique you can use to help you when you encounter socially powerful language. Think of the last time you had a conversation with someone whose opinion differed from yours. Did you acknowledge what they said? If so, great! If not, pretend you get to redo the conversation. What can you say to acknowledge what the person said even though you don't agree with them?

## LANGUAGE AND SERVICE AT ODOT

### ✘ 30-Minute Activity

**Part I** – Customers who speak English and customers who do not may not have the same experiences at ODOT and that’s okay. The goal of social equity isn’t for everyone to have the same experience, it’s for everyone to have an equitable experience. This means everyone has a positive experience where they can access the services we provide and receive excellent customer service. To achieve this, we must be able to identify what the customer is requesting and explicitly describe what constitutes excellent customer service.

- ✘ In the event that you cannot figure out what service the customer is requesting, what language services are available to you? It is extremely important that you find the answer to this question!
- ✘ Recall a situation where you received excellent customer service. Make a list of the things that made it excellent.

**Part II** – Now that you’ve answered those two questions, choose one or more of the activities below to dive deeper into the content individually with a group.

- ✘ After answering the first question in part 1, perhaps take some time to create additional resources or short cuts. Some things you may want to add or create include having examples or photos of common things you need to communicate, having the most frequently asked questions translated on a sheet of paper so they can point out what they still have questions about, and last but not least, any pro tips from your colleagues.
- ✘ What can you do to help your English-language learner (ELL) customers experience the items on your list from the second question in part I? If you’re with a group, compare your lists before answering this question.
- ✘ Have a discussion with your team about the language services available to you all. What are you able to accomplish with the services? What aren’t you able to accomplish and why? What are the ways, if any, your team has been able to accomplish those without the language services?
- ✘ Practice some problem solving regarding communication challenges. Identify the most critical information you and your team need to communicate to customers. Put each one on an index card, deal them out, and give each person 3 minutes to visually get the information across by drawing pictures, icons, etc. Do as many as you have time for. When you’re done, try to guess each other’s visual representations. Don’t let the person who drew it talk. Share how you figured it out so everyone can see what worked well. You can also do a version of this that involves acting out the items on the index card instead of drawing it.
- ✘ Try out one of the language services so you know what to do when you need to use it.

- ✗ Create a step-by-step on how to connect with people across multiple languages.
- ✗ In a team meeting, ask how someone who spoke [insert language] would connect with your team?

## SHAME, GUILT, AND RESILIENCE ACTIVITIES

### ✗ 5-Minute Activity

Recall a time you had difficulty being held accountable for something. How did you react? Were you experiencing guilt or shame? How do you know? (Tip: What were you telling yourself? How did your body react?) In what ways did you practice resilience?

### ✗ 5-Minute Activity

Ask someone who you've been avoiding because of their differing beliefs and values to have a conversation about it.

### ✗ 10-Minute Activity

Watch the recording of Maya Angelou reading "[Still I Rise.](#)" Through her poem, Maya Angelou practices resilience by challenging her mindset. Rather than seeing impossible barriers as ones that sink her, she sees and speaks herself into rising. Are you currently feeling like you're sinking in any way? If so, reframe it as rising. For example, maybe you're drowning in emails and that's exactly how you're saying it in your head. Instead, like Maya Angelou, perhaps you can tell yourself, "Every email I answer is one stroke closer to the surface. By answering these emails, I'm proving to myself that I'm not drowning, I'm swimming. I will reach the surface and when I do, I'll be a stronger swimmer."

### ✗ 10-Minute Activity

Write a letter of gratitude to someone who you had a challenging conversation with. Explain what you got out of it and thank them for their time.

### ✗ 30-Minute Activity

Do this [resilience building plan worksheet.pdf](#) ([acponline.org](#))

## EMPATHY ACTIVITIES

### ✘ 5-Minute Activity

View this [short video](#) by Brené Brown on what it means to have empathy. Then reflect on its message in your own life and in your own responses to people that you love and support. How does empathy show up for you? Do you invent silver linings? How would you want a friend or colleague at work respond to you as you face challenges and difficulties? How will you respond to them?

### ✘ 5-Minute Activity

Take this [empathy quiz](#) and consider what role your empathic ability plays in your life and relationships with other people. Reflect on how empathy helps shape your relationships at work and the outcomes you seek in your professional life.

# TEAM ACTIVITIES

*This section provides team activities to assist in exploring and practicing social equity concepts. This can be accomplished during team meetings, as other manager activities have in the past.*

## OPPRESSION ACTIVITIES

### ✦ 15-Minute Activity

[Watch this video on power](#)

#### Reflection Questions

1. What kind of power do you have or benefit from?
2. In thinking about “redistribution of power” being part of equity, how can we do that through our programs, projects, and policies at ODOT?

### ✦ 45-Minute Activity

\*\*\*This is a facilitated activity. The facilitator of this activity should prepare by reading the entire activity and creating an introduction for the group and offering the unpacking in a digestible manner. The group should not be asked to read through the material and do it.\*\*\*

#### Facilitator Preparation and Materials

<https://nationalseedproject.org/Key-SEED-Texts/white-privilege-unpacking-the-invisible-knapsack>

#### Discussion Questions

What is privilege? We all have privileges. What are yours? Were you surprised by any of the privileges you found in your invisible knapsack?

## UNCONSCIOUS BIAS ACTIVITIES

### ✦ 5-Minute Activity

One of the best things you can do to decrease unconscious bias is raise awareness. Bring up unconscious bias in your next group meeting! Suggest a resource that will resonate with your team, tell them what you learned from it, why you liked it, and ask if anyone interested in checking it out would like to have a conversation with you about it.

**✘ 10-Minute Activity**

Feedback: Get feedback, give feedback. Take 10 minutes to ask a coworker to give you feedback on a decision you made or a behavior you regularly engage in that involves other people. For example, if you want to work on gender bias, you could ask a coworker if they've noticed whether or not you ask your male coworkers about their kids just as much as your female coworkers.

**✘ 30-Minute Activity**

Locate a source that reinforces this unconscious bias and change it. Chose [Implicit Association Test](#) and take it. After you complete one, identify a stereotype you have about that group of people. If you can't come up with one, google "myths or stereotypes about [insert identity] people." Then ask yourself, "What's something I watch, read, listen to, talk about that makes me think this?" Write it down. Once everyone on your team has theirs written down, help each other come up with something you can watch, read, and/or listen to that challenges it. For example, in taking the Sexuality IAT some results show a preference towards straight people. If unable to think of a gay stereotype, you could google "stereotypes about gay people." One that comes up is all lesbians are masculine. If I could agree with that, I would ask my team what their suggestion is and perhaps land at watching "A Secret Love" or if I found that I believed all gay men are effeminate, I might watch the movie "The Way He Looks." These movies are counter to the stereotype.

## APPRECIATING ALL IDENTITIES ACTIVITY

**✘ 10-Minute Activity**

How do we as ODOT colleagues, peers, and friends engage with one another in acts of identity appreciation for who we are and what we bring to the workplace? How in our daily interactions with one another may we create opportunities for appreciation? List examples of how this shows up in the workplace and make commitments to exercising greater appreciation of who people are and how that positively impacts you in the workplace.

**✘ 30-Minute Activity**

Appreciation can be acquired. Work with your team members to build greater understanding of the identity ladder that culminates in identity appreciation. Discuss each rung on the ladder and talk about specific examples for each rung that you have seen in the workplace. Share your examples with one another. Pick one example from one of the lower rungs and together describe how you could rethink that interaction in way that would result in identity appreciation for that individual.



## PSYCHOLOGICAL SAFETY ACTIVITY

### ✦ 30-Minute Activity

Change the situation at the top of the yellow table to a comment or question someone in your group has heard but didn't know how to respond. Come up with examples for each of the strategies. Your group can do one in under five minutes. Try a few if you have 10 minutes or do the chart altogether or in small groups (breakout rooms) if you have 30 minutes. Here are a few in case you can't think of any: "He is a diversity hire." "Women shouldn't be doing [job]." "I don't understand why she works when her husband makes so much money."

#### You overhear a colleague say, "[Name] is a diversity hire."

Strategy	Example
Summarize and repeat	What I heard you say was
Invite to dialogue	
Share your experience	
Declare intolerable or unacceptable	
Appeal to values	
Express your feelings	
Ask them to explain	
Empathize with the underlying feeling	
Give information	
Involve others	

## GENDER INCLUSION ACTIVITIES

### ✦ 5-Minute Activity

Complete the following table of transgender inclusive language.

#### Transgender Inclusive Language

Avoid saying...	Instead say...
Hermaphrodite	
Transsexual	
Born male, born female	
"A transgender"	
Transgender people and normal people	
Both genders, opposite sexes	
Ladies and gentlemen	

**✘ 15-Minute Activity**

The table below contains a list of common things transgender people are asked or told, but are not inclusive. Split your team into pairs and try to provide an explanation for why these are “Don’t’s. Come back as a large group and share your answers. If you finish before the 15 minutes are up, answer the following questions with the group: Instead of “real” name, what term should you use? Are there any situations where knowing about someone’s genitals or surgical status is relevant at ODOT? How do you know if a person is transgender? If you would like to have your answers checked for this activity, you can check them by watching the social equity series recording on Gender Identity and Pronouns.

**Transgender Inclusive Language**

Don't ask... Don't say...	Explanation
When they decided to be trans	Being transgender is not a decision
If they will ever go back	
What their real name is	
What they looked like before	
About their genital or surgical status	
You look just like a real man/woman	
Your partner must be very open-minded	
I wouldn't have known you were transgender	

**✘ 30-Minute Activity**

Have your group respond to the following questions in groups of about 2-3 people.

- ✘ You introduce your name and pronouns to someone and they ask you to explain... how do you respond?
- ✘ Coworker A is now using a new name and pronouns. Coworker B is someone you are close to and you notice they are not using Coworker A’s new name and pronouns. Suppose you wanted to say something about it.
- ✘ What would you say? What would you say to coworker B if coworker A uses “they” pronouns and Coworker B refers to them as “it?”
- ✘ One of your coworkers uses some of the language in the “avoid” column of the Trans Inclusive Language table and you’re pretty sure they just don’t know the term is one to avoid. What would you say to them?

## MICROAGGRESSION ACTIVITIES

### ✘ 10-Minute Activity

Watch the video [Addressing Microaggressions and Biases in the Workplace](#) with your team. Reflect on what is shared and have a conversation with your team members. Examine microaggressions and bias in the workplace. Discuss examples of how microaggression and bias show up in the workplace. How can this be interrupted and changed? What responsibilities do each of us have increase inclusion? What commitments can we make to one another now around how we will work to stop microaggressions that may occur in the workplace? For examples of acts and stories of inclusion as a jumping off point for discussion, visit [real people, real stories](#) and read some of the real stories of inclusion that may inspire conversation.

### ✘ 30-Minute Activity

Microaggressions can be examined, causes (like stereotyping and unconscious bias) can be understood, and behaviors unlearned. Work with your team to build a greater understanding of microaggressions. View, reflect, and discuss this PBS Race Matters piece with microaggression expert Derald Wing Sue on [How unintentional but insidious bias can be most harmful](#). Discuss examples of how microaggression and bias show up in the workplace. The [Recognizing Microaggressions and the Messages They Send Tool](#) can help with examples and in gaining a deeper understanding of how and why microaggressions are hurtful. How can this be interrupted and changed? What responsibilities do each of us have increase inclusion? What commitments can we make to one another now around how we will work to stop microaggressions that may occur in the workplace?

## THE POWER OF LANGUAGE ACTIVITIES

### ✘ 5-Minute Activity

When it comes to talking about identity, it can be really uncomfortable, frustrating, and embarrassing to mess up. Even more frustrating is when we're well-intentioned and our impact doesn't match up. Consider the following situation: Shawndra says to Lisa, "You're pretty for an Asian girl!" What was Shawndra's intention? What does that message say about Asian people? What was likely the impact? What could Shawndra have said so her impact met her intentions?

### ✘ 10-Minute Activity

Have each person think of the last time they or someone they know overreacted. If you can think of a situation related to social equity, that's even better. What was in the "pile" behind that expression? What was the larger reason for the overreaction? If you have time, what are some things that could have been done

to prevent the reaction? If the person on the receiving end de-escalated the situation, discuss how they did it and why it worked. If they did not, come up with a few things they could do next time should the situation arise.

**✘ 30-Minute Activity**

Impact over intention is the most important concept in this month’s guidance. It can also be really challenging to accept the probable impact of our own language especially if it’s something we say without thinking and truly don’t mean anything by it. The goal of this activity is to gain perspective by considering things from different angles. Please share the goal of the activity with your team and if the conversation isn’t helping you get to that goal, redirect it by reminding them. Make a table with two columns like the one below and ask your team to brainstorm some things that you all have said, heard or seen that didn’t come across the way the person who said it was probably hoping. Additionally, give your team the opportunity to share the things they have been hesitant about saying because they were afraid it wouldn’t come across the right way. Next to each of those, try to identify the impact. Here are three examples to get you started.

Statement/Question	Impact (What’s heard)
You don’t act like a normal Black person. I don’t see you as Black.	You’re not Black because I am uncomfortable around Black people but comfortable around you. I don’t acknowledge your identity.
Everyone can succeed if they just work hard enough!	If you’re unsuccessful, it’s because you want to be unsuccessful. Everyone has the same opportunities and if you worked harder you would ave a good life.
Given what your husband does, do you really need to work?	Your place is at home. You are taking a job from a man who could support a family like your husband.

**SERVING IN MULTIPLE LANGUAGES ACTIVITY**

To hear pronunciations, please enter the text into Google Translate and press the volume button beneath the text. Also, lean on Google Translate to dig deeper; it is a wonderful start. If you add to this resource and make it more complete, please email [socialequity@odot.state.or.us](mailto:socialequity@odot.state.or.us) so we can share it with the agency.

Below are what we call starting points. It contains examples of common customer service phrases along with their translations in three languages. Create your own starting points. Some other things you may want to add or create in a separate document include examples or photos of common things you need to

communicate, and the most frequently asked questions translated so they can point out what they still have questions about. This can be done collaboratively via SharePoint and available for anyone on your team to access.

English	Spanish	English	Vietnamese	English	Chinese (Mandarin)
Hello!	Hola!	Hello!	Xin chào!	Hello!	Nǐ hǎo!
I don't speak...	Yo no hablo español	I don't speak...	Tôi không nói tiếng việt	I don't speak Chinese	Wǒ bù huì shuō zhōngwén
Please wait	Espere por favor	Please wait	Vui lòng đợi	Please wait	qǐng shāo děng
Translator	Traductor	Translator	Người phiên dịch	Interpreter	yì zhě
Please	Por favor	Please	Xin vui lòng	Please	qǐng
Thank you	Gracias	Thank you	Cảm ơn bạn	Thank you	xièxiè
You're welcome	De nada	You're welcome	Không có gì	You're welcome	bù kèqì
I'm sorry	Lo siento	I'm sorry	Tôi xin lỗi	Sorry	duìbùqǐ
Repeat	Repita	Repeat	Nói lại	Repeat	chóngfù
Slower	Más Despacio	Slower	Chậm hơn	Slower	màn điǎn
I don't understand	No comprendo	I don't understand	Tôi không hiểu	I don't understand	wǒ bù míngbái
Goodbye	Adiós!	Goodbye	Tạm biệt	Goodbye	zàijiàn
I'm sorry to ask you this, but do you have someone who can translate so I can get you the best service?	Lamento preguntarle esto, pero ¿tiene alguien que pueda traducir para que pueda brindarle el mejor servicio?	I'm sorry to ask you this, but do you have someone who can translate so I can get you the best service?	Tôi rất tiếc phải hỏi bạn điều này, nhưng bạn có người nào có thể dịch để tôi có thể cung cấp cho bạn dịch vụ tốt nhất không?	I'm sorry to ask you this, but do you have someone who can translate so I can get you the best service?	Hěn bàoqiǎn wèn nín zhège wèntí, dànshì nín yǒu kěyǐ fānyì de rén, yìbiàn wèi nín tígōng zuì hǎo de fúwù ma?
No problem, please wait so I can get help.	No hay problema, espere para que pueda obtener ayuda.	No problem, please wait so I can get help.	Không sao, vui lòng đợi để tôi có thể nhận trợ giúp		

## SHAME, GUILT, AND RESILIENCE ACTIVITIES

### ✘ 5-Minute Activity

Reflect upon the ways you commonly practice resilience in any context. When you feel bad about something you did, how do you “bounce back?” Make a list of your top three resilience strategies. In what diversity, equity, and inclusion related scenarios have you used those strategies? If you cannot locate a time you used them, what can you do in the next 30 days to take a deeper dive into equity work? Here are some ideas: make a plan to join a group, read a book with a coworker, and schedule a time to have a conversation with someone who challenges your viewpoints.

Identify a time you felt guilt or shame in a social justice context. Perhaps you said something racially insensitive, you didn't speak up when someone was being treated unfairly, or you made a snap judgment about someone and were called out on it. How did you practice resilience?

### ✘ 5-Minute Activity

It can be helpful to notice physical differences or bodily changes during conversations because it brings a level of awareness to our emotional states. One way to get good at doing this is to practice outside of tense moments. Lead your group through a Body Scan. See a 3 minute script: [A 3-Minute Body Scan Meditation to Cultivate Mindfulness - Mindful](#)

### ✘ 10-Minute Activity

**Guilt, Shame, and Privilege:** In reviewing the [Big 10 Identities](#), has there ever been a time that you felt guilt or shame as it relates to one or more of the identities in which you experience privilege? Why do you think you felt guilt rather than shame or vice versa? If you felt guilt, what action did you take or could you take to move past your guilt? If you're struggling, decide whether it was healthy guilt (guilt about something you can control) or unhealthy guilt (something you can't control). If you felt shame, what is the message you're telling yourself? How can you reframe your thinking towards guilt and into resilience?

### ✘ 10-Minute Activity

**Unpacking words of wisdom:** Choose two or three of the following quotes to reflect on or discuss with your team. What experiences come to mind when you read it? How does the author's message apply to social equity in your work at ODOT?

- ✘ "Many, many resilient people learn to carefully accept what they can't change about a situation and then ask themselves what they can actually change," Dr. Steven M. Southwick, Resilience Author.
- ✘ "Resilience is accepting your new reality, even if it's less good than the one you had before. You can fight it, you can do nothing but scream about what you've lost, or you can accept that and try to put together something that's good." — Elizabeth Edwards
- ✘ "Persistence and resilience only come from having been given the chance to work through difficult problems." — Gever Tulley
- ✘ "Do not judge me by my success, judge me by how many times I fell down and got back up again." — Nelson Mandela

### ✘ 10-Minute Activity

**Confronting Inadequacy and Practicing Supportive Feedback:** Name something that brings up feelings of inadequacy for you in DEI spaces. For example, lack of experience engaging in DEI conversations, concern you will say something insensitive, feeling ashamed you don't know something everyone else seems to be aware of... imagine your best friend is telling you that this is how they feel. Write how you would respond to them. What would you say? What tone of voice would you use? Now take turns sharing what makes you feel inadequate in DEI spaces with your group. When it's not your turn, respond to your group using what you wrote as your response to your best friend.

### ✘ 10-Minute Activity

Review the 5 tips above and practice utilizing them by discussing a low stakes unpopular opinion. For example: pineapple does not belong on pizza, the Beatles are overrated, books are better than movies, breakfast should not be eaten for dinner.

### ✘ 30-Minute Activity

Understanding your fears, motivations, desires, and personality traits can help you navigate situations that require resilience. The Enneagram personality test is, “one of the most powerful and insightful tools for understanding ourselves and others. At its core, the Enneagram helps us to see ourselves at a deeper, more objective level and can be of invaluable assistance on our path to self-knowledge.” Take a free version of the Enneagram personality test [here](#). Put your type in the chat so you can get an idea of the group’s make up. Read the sections called “Your Type in Brief” and “Personal Growth Recommendations” [here](#). Share with the group and discuss what insights you gained.

### ✘ 30-Minute Activities

Building a Basis for Resilience: Split randomly into groups of 4-5 people using zoom breakout rooms. Each person will take turns for three full minutes to answer the following question while everyone else takes notes on what they say: Why is diversity, equity, and inclusion work important to you? No one except the person answering the question is allowed to talk for a full three minutes. This pushes them to dig deep so don’t talk or zoom chat until their three minutes completely up. Keep your group’s answers handy for when the work gets tough and they are struggling with DEI work. When that time arises, remind each other your reasons for doing DEI work to help your team push past difficult times.

## EMPATHY ACTIVITY

### ✘ 15-Minute Activity

Empathy is partly innate and partly learned. Work with your team members to build greater empathy skills. Review the [Eight Ways to Improve your Empathy](#) with your team. Each team members picks one of the 8 ways to focus on in their own life. Write down at least 3 actions that you will take to build empathy in that way and share out your commitments with your team. Encourage one another, support one another’s commitment to action, and build greater empathy together!

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