

The Essentials of DEI Learning and Development

Each culture, organization, and situation is unique to itself. However, we know that inequity and specifically, white supremacy is predictable and pervasive. With that in mind, we recommend the following:

- ✓ **Create a common language.**
Define terms that speak to your organization's culture and involve ALL in that process.
- ✓ **Scaffold curricula on the structural reality of inequity.**
For example, for far too long we've chosen to focus our efforts almost exclusively on specific, explicit racist behaviors by individuals. Yes, it's necessary to call out or call in, when applicable. However, these individual actions represent drops in the vast ocean. This is NOT to minimize the impact, influence, pain, or power individuals' racist actions have. We're saying that whacking each mole individually is not the whole picture. We also need to dismantle the entire systems of discrimination. **We're called on to do our internal work to grow, learn, and do better, followed by our external work to create a more just and equitable society.** That external work is not only championing diversity, equity, and inclusion in all spaces we frequent no matter who is in the room. It is also working to dismantle the structures that sustain inequity. We cannot do that if we don't understand the scaffolding that supports inequity.
- ✓ **Identifying and understanding unconscious bias and providing tools to mitigate.**
Historically, this has been the focal point of all DEI training. Where has that gotten us? If this strategy alone were effective, we wouldn't be grappling with the same problems of discrimination today. Unconscious bias is an important **piece** of DEI training. It isn't the whole pie. One of the components we like to share about unconscious bias training is the current neuroscience research on how all of our brains are wired. From that point, it's a natural step to introduce and talk about shame—something we've sidestepped for too long.
- ✓ **Defining and addressing microaggressions.**
If you want to deliver a DEI training that leads to real outcomes, you must include this topic. It isn't as simple as, "Here's a quick 30-second module on how not to say stupid stuff." There are so many Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) thought leaders paving a powerful path on this topic. Listen and learn from them and then take that to your teams to discuss, dig in deep, and get comfortable with discomfort.
- ✓ **Draft a roadmap for allyship and accomplices.**
If you've been paying attention to anything over the past two years (and let's take a moment to call this what it is: a much-needed uprising), you've probably also heard and witnessed white people ask repeatedly across social media, "What can I do? Tell me what to do." Telling people to "Google it", which so many of us have done, doesn't create real change nor does it birth strong, fully functioning accomplices (we'll define this term in a second). Learning and development opportunities that offer not only scenarios, but also provide learners with actionable steps to guide them are not only valuable, but lead to real change. There's a difference between an ally and an accomplice. One is not necessarily better than the other. Our definitions here come from our leader's lifelong activism and social justice work. Allies mostly engage in activism by standing with an individual or group in a marginalized community, while **accomplices stand with and as an active participant** to dismantle structures that oppress individuals or groups.