Webinar 4: Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Employee Mental Health

Thrive in your Workplace | Dr. Dana E. Crawford
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An opening caveat…

This presentation offers an opportunity to go beyond introductory diversity, equity and inclusion concepts by learning about the ways these concepts intersect with workplace mental health.
Presentation overview

• Background

• Developing a shared language

• Prevalence of bias, prejudice, and racism and the impact on mental health

• Discrimination and bias in the workplace

• Strategies to identify and disrupt bias, prejudice, and racism in the workplace
You are a “good person”

• If you are watching this webinar, some part, if not all of you, does not want to have bias, prejudice, or racism

• You may desire to work in a “diverse” work setting

• You may want to feel safe to be the best employee you can be

• You may not want to cause others to feel unsafe

• In short, it’s likely that you value diversity
Insufficient approaches to supporting diversity in the workplace

- Otherizing: White, heterosexual male identified positioned as the standard
- Under-exploring whiteness as a race and culture
- Positioning people with minority status as experts, and not learners
- Guilt-inducing framing for people of privilege
- Increasing awareness of diversity, without concrete action steps to change behaviors
- Developing cultural competency cannot be done quickly and is often incompatible with the fast expectations of the workplace
Diversity and discrimination often co-exist

- Discrimination – even in diverse settings – affects how people interact with the world around them, the spaces they feel comfortable in, and the opportunities they can access.

- Discrimination has been associated with mental health challenges such as trauma, stress and depression, and can produce negative emotions such as self-blame and decrease self-esteem, shame, fear and guilt.
Valuing diversity is insufficient.
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Let’s make sure we are talking about the same thing by establishing a shared language.
Relevant terms

- Bias
- Prejudice
- White privilege
- White guilt
- Micro-aggressions
- Racism
Bias

• A subjective preference or preconceived notion that prevents a person from maintaining objectivity

• Implicit / unconscious bias
  o Attitudes or stereotypes that affect our understanding, actions, and decisions in an unconscious manner

  o These biases are both favorable and unfavorable, are activated involuntarily and without an individual’s awareness or intentional control
Prejudice

- Prejudice is an evaluation of, or an emotional response towards, a social group based on preconceptions.

- Expressions of prejudice and stereotyping are often regulated on the basis of personal beliefs and social norms.
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• Strategies to identify and disrupt bias, prejudice and racism in the workplace
Bias, prejudice, and racism are in the air we breathe

- Affect how communities of color access services and opportunities, including mental health support.
- Communities of color make-up 65% of New York City’s population, yet have demonstrated prevalent and often unaddressed mental health needs, as well as difficulty accessing appropriate care due to structural inequities.
How do we develop bias, prejudice, & racism?

- Influenced by our background, cultural environment and personal experiences
- Biased media representations
- Social experiences
- Repeated exposure to stereotypical associations and prejudices that become automated in our long-term memory
Forms of racism and how they can impact mental health

• Individual / personal: Believing you have better qualities or are more professional due to your race

• Interpersonal: Questioning someone’s qualifications or position because of their race

• Institutional: Expecting Black employees to volunteer to be on culture-related committees without financial compensation, while providing incentives for other types of committee work

• Cultural: Developing policies related to professionalism that only impact Black employees such as not allowing braided hairstyles

• Structural / systemic: Prioritizing unpaid internships as a hiring practice, which may put employees from Black and indigenous backgrounds at a disadvantaged due to historical, structural practices that have deprived them of wealth
Factors increasing bias, prejudice, and racism common at work

- Time pressure
- Vague or confusing situations
- Too much information at once ("cognitive overload")
- Lack of attention being paid to the task
- Positions of privilege related to hierarchy or identity
Privilege doesn’t mean that you haven’t faced hardship… It means that your skin color, gender, or sexual orientation aren’t the things making it harder.
Socially-oppressed groups and socially-privileged groups

Female
Person of color
LGBTQIA
Non-European American
Person with a disability
Lower-income

Male
White
Heterosexual
European-American
Physically- and mentally-able
Higher-income
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Culture is a *silent* participant in every interaction.
Bias is everywhere

- Schools
- Workplaces
- Businesses
- Religious Orgs
- Medicine
- Relationships
- Government

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Bias, prejudice, racism impact all aspects of life, including work

• Our health
• Our behavior
• Our interactions
• Our relationships
• Our work
• Our organization
Bias has permeated the workplace

• Applicants with white-sounding names receive 50% more callbacks than applicants with black-sounding names

• Credentials from an elite university results in more employer responses for all candidates, however Black candidates from elite universities only do as well as White candidates from less selective universities

• Race results in a double penalty: When employers respond to Black candidates, it is for jobs with lower starting salaries and lower prestige than those of White peers
There are many potential types of workplace discrimination *

- Age
- Disability
- Equal Pay/Compensation
- Genetics
- Harassment
- National Origin
- Pregnancy
- Race/Color
- Religion
- Retaliation
- Sex
- Sexual Harassment

*Prohibited by the laws enforced by EEOC (U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity)
Which workplace decisions do bias, prejudice, & racism impact?

- Recruiting and interviewing
- Hiring decisions
- Mentoring and training opportunities
- Assigning jobs and tasks
- Taking feedback and suggestions
- Promotional decisions
- Performance reviews
- Conducting marketing campaigns
- Choosing board members
- Treating customers
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Manifestations of discrimination and bias at work</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Questionable hiring practices</td>
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<td>• Lack of diversity</td>
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<td>• Unequal pay, and overlooked or denied promotions</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Demeaning and alienating communication</td>
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<td>• Unsubstantiated discipline and retaliation</td>
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<td>• Negative changes in workload</td>
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<td>• Unfair promotions or assignment of work</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Assumptions regarding employees’ abilities</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Disparate application of discipline or policies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• References to age, race, gender, etc.</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Unequal compensation or benefits</td>
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Discrimination can increase risk of poor health outcomes

- Stress
- The common cold
- Cardiovascular disease
- Cancer
- Mortality
Discrimination at work can lead to mental health challenges

- Self-blame and decrease self-esteem
- Somatic symptoms
- Depression
- Anxiety
- Trauma
- Shame
- Fear
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• Strategies to identify and disrupt bias, prejudice, and racism in the workplace
Diversity alone is insufficient. Why?
Fear of Punishment

• Embarrassed
• Shamed
• Fired
• Sued
• Assaulted
• Killed
We have become fragile

Even a minimum amount of cultural stress becomes intolerable, triggering a range of defensive moves.

- Anger
- Fear
- Guilt
- Argumentation
- Silence
- Leaving the stress-inducing situation
White fragility

• Belief that conversations about racism should be comfortable

• Belief that discomfort should be avoided

• Belief that uncomfortable conversations about race are bad and intolerable

• Belief that if the conversation is uncomfortable, it is the responsibility of racial minorities to teach white folks how to tolerate race conversations
We all have multicultural identities

- Political Affiliation
- Race & Ethnicity
- Gender
- Mental & Physical Ability
- Socio-economic Status
- Language
- Religion
- Sexual orientation

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The term was coined by Harvard University professor and psychiatrist **Chester M. Pierce** to describe insults and dismissals which he regularly witnessed non-Black Americans inflicting on Blacks.
“Microaggressions are everyday slights and indignities some people encounter all the time - while others aren’t even aware they’re committing them.” - Derald Wing Sue
Consequences of diversity without equity and inclusion

- False sense of fairness
- Bias and blind spots
- Presenteeism
- High turnover
- Tense work environment
- Burn-out
# Equality versus equity

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Equality</th>
<th>Equity</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Everyone gets the same size pants <strong>regardless of height, weight, climate, religion, or body</strong></td>
<td>Everyone gets clothing <strong>based on height, weight, climate, religion, or body</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Focuses on rules and fairness</td>
<td>Focuses on inclusion and efficiency</td>
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Focus on the impact, not on the intent.
Knowledge about racism, prejudice, and bias is critical for change.

With knowledge and deliberate effort automatic and unconscious mental responses, like bias and prejudice, can be overridden.

However, the person must be motivated to engage in this active process for change to occur.
5 strategies to identify and disrupt bias in the workplace

**Impact**
Focus on impact rather than intent of actions and policies

**Reframe**
Reframe the conversation to focus on inclusion, equity, and respect, and away from equality and cultural blindness

**Collect data**
Gather feedback to understand employee experience

**Fund**
Use organizational funding to support diverse expertise

**Improve**
Create a culture of good, better, best
“LET UP” on bias, prejudice, and racism

• **LISTEN** to the person and not your bias

• **EMPATHIZE** with yourself, then others

• **TELL YOUR STORY** with “I” statements

• **UNDERSTAND** the impact, rather than focusing on your intention

• **PSYCHOEDUCATE** and make it clear that you do not collude with bias, prejudice and racism
Creating a sense of safety in the workplace

Who gets to define safety?

The person who is in danger
Communicating safety concerns respectfully

- “I need some time and space with this – can we discuss this further in our next meeting?”

- “Thank you for raising this issue. I value your perspective, but I’m not ready to process this.”

- “I worry that you will not understand my perspective and my experience, and so I cannot discuss this.”
Inviting a respectful exploration of safety

• “I have biases and I do not want those to hurt you – can we work together to discuss this further?”

• “Would having someone join us in this conversation create more safety for you?”

• “We do not have to figure out all of this today, let’s start with what feels the most important and/or least tender”
Focus on the *experience*, not on agreement
## Reflection questions

- What are your values around the intersection of diversity, equity, inclusion and mental health?
- What would you want your colleague to know/do/feel?
- What would keep you from speaking up/living your values?
- What would you do first to keep yourself feeling safe?
- How can you be safe and live your values at work?
Thank you for the honor of your time and attention.

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Webinar 1: Building the Business Case
Webinar 2: The Model for Improvement
Webinar 3: Evaluating your Mental Health Initiative
Webinar 4: Diversity, Equity, Inclusion & Employee Mental Health
Webinar 5: Accommodations, Risk & Compliance
Webinar 6: Offering High Quality Benefits
Webinar 7: Supportive Management Practices
Webinar 8: Addressing Burnout in the Workplace
Webinar 9: Building a Peer Support Program
Webinar 10: Creating a Vicarious Trauma Informed Workplace

Visit https://thrivenyc.cityofnewyork.us/workplace for more resources and webinars about workplace mental health.


