



6 STEPS OF INCLUSIVE CONVERSATION



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Four Links

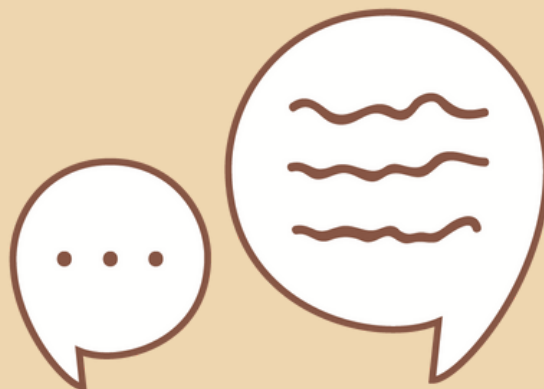
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What is inclusive conversation?

Inclusive conversation is a type of conversation that involves creating an environment in which all participants feel valued, heard, and respected, regardless of their background or identity. The goal of inclusive conversation is to create a safe and welcoming space for everyone to share their thoughts and opinions, and to learn from each other's experiences.

We need inclusive conversation because it helps to promote diversity, equity, and inclusion. When people feel included in conversations, they are more likely to feel valued and respected, which can lead to greater engagement and productivity. Inclusive conversation also helps to reduce the likelihood of misunderstandings or conflicts, and it can promote empathy and understanding between individuals who may have different backgrounds or perspectives. Ultimately, inclusive conversation is an important tool for building stronger, more inclusive communities and organizations.





What are
the 6 steps
of inclusive
conversation?



SELF AND OTHER UNDERSTANDING

It allows individuals to recognize and appreciate the diversity of experiences and perspectives that people bring to the conversation. This step involves taking the time to reflect on one's own beliefs, biases, and experiences and how they shape one's views and opinions. It is important to recognize that everyone has a unique background and set of experiences that shape their worldview. Understanding why one thinks and feels as they do is crucial in order to recognize that others may have different perspectives that are just as valid. When completing the sentence "I am," individuals may identify with various aspects of their identity such as race, religion, gender, occupation, familial relationships, and more. It is important to recognize that there is no right or wrong way to identify oneself and that everyone has multiple aspects of their identity that shape who they are. For example, as an African-American woman and a baby boomer, experiences and perspectives are shaped by my race, gender, and generation. Understanding this about myself allows me to recognize that others may have different experiences and perspectives based on their own identities and backgrounds. Overall, self and other understanding is an important step in creating inclusive conversations as it allows individuals to recognize and appreciate the diversity of experiences and perspectives that people bring to the conversation. By understanding ourselves and others, we can create a safe and welcoming environment where everyone feels valued and respected.



BEING READY FOR INCLUSIVE CONVERSATIONS

Being ready for inclusive conversations is another crucial step in creating a safe and respectful environment where all participants feel comfortable sharing their perspectives. This step involves developing empathy and understanding towards others, as well as assessing individual and team readiness to engage in inclusive conversations. One useful framework for assessing readiness is the "4 E methods" - exposure, experience, education, and empathy. The first E, exposure, refers to the diversity of people and perspectives that individuals are exposed to in their personal and professional lives. The more exposure individuals have to people who are different from themselves, the more likely they are to be ready to engage in inclusive conversations. The second E, experience, builds on exposure by emphasizing the importance of actively seeking out opportunities to learn from people who are different from oneself. This could involve attending events, reading books, or volunteering with organizations that focus on diversity and inclusion. The third E, education, involves gaining a deeper understanding of the history, context, and experiences of different identity groups. This could involve taking classes, attending workshops, or engaging in self-directed learning to broaden one's knowledge and understanding. The fourth E, empathy, is perhaps the most important aspect of being ready for inclusive conversations. This involves developing a genuine curiosity and concern for others, as well as actively seeking to understand their perspectives and experiences.

Assessing individual readiness for inclusive conversations involves considering these four E's and reflecting on one's own experiences, exposure, education, and empathy. Similarly, team readiness can be assessed by considering the collective experiences, exposure, education, and empathy of team members. Overall, being ready for inclusive conversations is essential for creating a safe and welcoming environment where all participants feel valued and respected. By developing empathy and understanding towards others, as well as assessing readiness using the 4 E model, individuals and teams can take proactive steps to engage in inclusive conversations that promote understanding, respect, and collaboration.





PREPARING FOR CONVERSATIONS

Another step towards creating a safe and respectful space for dialogue. This step involves answering questions like who, why, what, how, where, and when, as well as practicing role-plays to develop skills in preparing for and engaging in inclusive conversations. Preparing for inclusive conversations begins with understanding why the conversation is necessary and what the desired outcomes are. It also involves identifying who should be involved in the dialogue and why, as well as considering the best way to conduct the conversation. This could involve setting ground rules for the conversation, such as avoiding personal attacks, actively listening to others, and acknowledging and respecting differences. Another critical aspect of preparing for inclusive conversations is identifying where and when the conversation will take place. Choosing a safe and neutral location that is free from distractions and interruptions can help create an environment where all participants feel comfortable sharing their perspectives. Practicing role-plays can also be a valuable tool for preparing for inclusive conversations. This involves simulating different scenarios and practicing how to respond in a respectful and inclusive manner. Role-plays can help individuals develop the skills and confidence needed to engage in difficult conversations with empathy and understanding. For example, let's say you're working with a client who wants to create a safe space for employees impacted by recent incidents involving their community.

In preparing for this conversation, you might ask yourself:

- Who should be involved in the conversation?
- Should it be open to all employees or only those who have been directly impacted?
- What are the desired outcomes of the conversation?
- Are there specific goals or objectives that need to be achieved?
How should the conversation be conducted?
- Etc.

By answering these questions and practicing role-plays, you can develop the skills and confidence needed to engage in inclusive conversations that promote understanding, respect, and collaboration.



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CREATING SHARED MEANING AND COMMON GROUND

One method to create shared meaning is to use language that is clear and unambiguous. This means avoiding vague or abstract terms that can be interpreted in different ways. Instead, use concrete examples or specific language that clearly conveys your meaning. Another method is to actively listen and paraphrase what the other person is saying to ensure understanding. This involves repeating what you heard in your own words to confirm that you understood the message correctly. Reflecting on similarities and differences can also help create shared meaning. Acknowledging what you have in common can help establish a foundation for understanding, while recognizing differences can help identify areas that need further discussion and exploration. Creating visual aids or using analogies can also help create shared meaning. Sometimes a picture or analogy can convey a message more effectively than words alone. Using humor or storytelling can also be effective in creating shared meaning. Humor can help break down barriers and make people more comfortable, while storytelling can help illustrate a point or create an emotional connection. Encouraging questions and feedback can help clarify misunderstandings and build shared understanding. It is important to create an environment where people feel comfortable asking questions and expressing their thoughts and concerns. Finally, acknowledging and addressing potential biases and assumptions can help create shared meaning. It is important to be aware of your own biases and assumptions and to actively work to overcome them in order to establish common ground and understanding.



RECIPROCAL EMPATHY

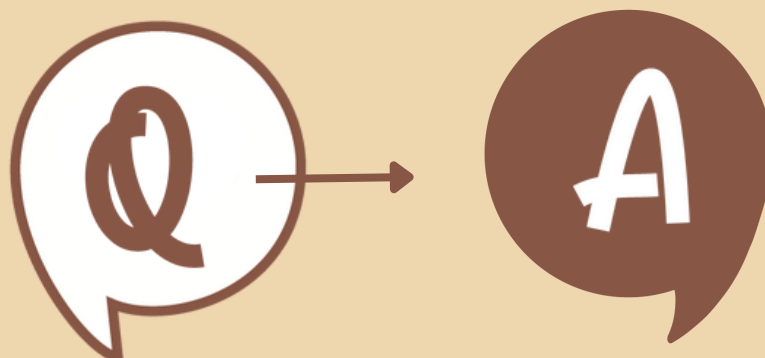
It involves not only understanding others but also putting oneself in their shoes. This means attempting to feel what they feel, think how they think, and understand their experiences from their perspective. Reciprocal empathy requires a balance between empathizing and minimizing others' experiences. Empathy involves acknowledging the feelings and experiences of others without downplaying or invalidating them. To create reciprocal empathy, exercises can be done to discover and define methods for creating empathy. These exercises can include activities such as sharing personal stories, listening without judgment, and practicing active listening. It is essential to create a safe space where individuals can express their feelings without fear of judgment. It is also crucial to acknowledge that everyone has different experiences and perspectives, and these differences should be respected. It is important to approach conversations with an open mind, a willingness to learn and understand, and a commitment to treating everyone with respect and dignity. By doing so, individuals can build trust, foster empathy, and create a shared understanding that leads to inclusive conversations.






INTERPRET AND BRIDGE

After distinguishing interpretations and clarifying definitions, it is important to identify areas of agreement and disagreement. Once areas of disagreement are identified, it's important to explore them with an open mind and ask questions to better understand the other person's perspective. This step also involves looking for commonalities or areas of overlap between different perspectives. Finally, to bridge the gap between differing perspectives, it is important to find ways to build connections and understanding between different groups. This can involve finding shared goals or interests, recognizing the value of different perspectives, and finding ways to work together towards common goals. It may also involve finding ways to respectfully disagree and manage conflicts when they arise. Overall, the interpret and bridge step is about finding ways to move beyond differences and build connections and understanding between different groups. By engaging in this step, individuals can work towards more inclusive conversations and relationships that are built on a foundation of respect and understanding.





How and where
we can use these
methods?

THE 6 STEPS OF INCLUSIVE CONVERSATION CAN BE USED IN A VARIETY OF SETTINGS AND WITH DIFFERENT TYPES OF GROUPS, INCLUDING:

1. WORKPLACE:

Inclusive conversation can be used in team meetings, brainstorming sessions, and other workplace settings to promote collaboration and ensure that all voices are heard and respected.

2. EDUCATIONAL SETTINGS:

Inclusive conversation can be used in classrooms, seminars, and other educational settings to encourage critical thinking, promote diversity of thought, and help students learn from each other.

3. COMMUNITY GROUPS:

Inclusive conversation can be used in community groups, such as neighborhood associations or volunteer organizations, to promote understanding and cooperation among members.

4. FAMILY GATHERINGS:

Inclusive conversation can be used in family gatherings, such as holiday dinners or reunions, to promote healthy communication and avoid conflicts.

5. SOCIAL SETTINGS:

Inclusive conversation can be used in social settings, such as parties or informal gatherings, to ensure that everyone feels welcome and valued.

Overall, the 6 steps of inclusive conversation can be used in any group or setting where people are coming together to communicate and interact. By following these steps, individuals can help create a more inclusive and respectful environment and foster greater understanding and empathy among group members.

Activities & Exercises:

1. "ONE WORD"

Participants take turns sharing one word that describes how they are feeling in the moment. This helps to establish an environment of emotional safety and trust.

2. "IDENTITY SCAVENGER HUNT"

Participants are given a list of identity groups and asked to find someone in the room who identifies with each group. This helps to increase exposure and experience with people from different identity groups.

3. "EMPATHY MAPPING"

Participants are given a scenario and asked to put themselves in someone else's shoes and describe what they would be thinking, feeling, and experiencing. This exercise helps to develop empathy and understanding.

4. "CONVERSATION PLANNING"

Participants are given a scenario and asked to plan a conversation around a polarizing topic using the "who, what, why, where, when, and how" questions. This exercise helps to prepare for inclusive conversations and establish clear goals and expectations.

5. "ROLE PLAY"

Participants are given a polarizing topic and asked to role-play a conversation with each other. This exercise helps to practice and prepare for real conversations.

6. "STORY SHARING"

Participants take turns sharing a personal story that relates to the topic of the conversation. This helps to establish common ground and shared experiences.

7. "MIND MAPPING"

Participants write down their thoughts and ideas about a topic and then compare and contrast their mind maps. This exercise helps to identify areas of agreement and disagreement and establish shared meaning.

8. "ACTIVE LISTENING"

Participants are paired up and take turns sharing their thoughts and feelings about a particular topic while the other person listens without interrupting or judging. This exercise helps to develop inclusive listening skills and reciprocal empathy.

9. "EMPATHY WALK"

Participants are blindfolded and guided through a course by a partner who gives verbal directions. This exercise helps to develop empathy by experiencing what it's like to rely on someone else for guidance.

10. "VALUE ASSESSMENT"

Participants are given a list of values and asked to rank them in order of importance. This exercise helps to identify areas of common ground and establish shared values.



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