# Inclusion

*When I include everyone on my team, I’m creating a positive and inclusive workplace*

An inclusive culture may include a variety of tangible elements, such as acceptance and appreciation of diversity, regard for and fair treatment of each employee, respect for each employee's contribution, and equal opportunity for each employee to realise his or her full potential.

## Scenario

Jim, Leanne, Christine and Desmond are sitting at a table in a meeting room to brainstorm some ideas for a large upcoming project. Jim, Leanne and Christine have been working for the public service for many years, and are comfortable that particular processes and programs will be the best option for this project. Desmond opens his laptop to share some of the ideas he has developed in preparation for the meeting. While he is talking about his first suggestion, Leanne interrupts and says “No, we don’t have budget for that and that wouldn’t work for this project.” Jim builds on Leanne’s feedback, saying “Besides, we did a similar project last year, and that worked well. What you’re suggesting would never get approval.” Christine adds to this point, saying “Maybe I’ll share what I’ve prepared and we can go from there.” Leanne and Jim agree. Later, Desmond decides to email his ideas to the Director, who unexpectedly loves Desmond’s thinking and wants the team to build from it instead.

How might your approach be different to Jim, Leanne, Christine’s in order to shape a more positive and productive workplace?

**Respect:** Understand that everyone is entitled to share their opinion on a certain topic, whether or not this view is agreeable, correct, or how things are usually done. Acknowledge that diversity of thought can bring new and fresh perspectives to an organisation and help to build a better workplace and deliver improved outcomes for everybody.

**Reflect:** Ask yourself some questions. If I was Desmond, would I feel like my opinion had been listened to and valued by the rest of the team? Was the way I gave my own feedback in this meeting helpful, constructive and inclusive?

**Reset:** Adjust how these situations are approached so that everyone feels valued. It might be that you encourage everyone to give their feedback, tell them what you found positive or helpful about their point of view, discourage interruptions, and promote supportive language and tone in the delivery of feedback on opinions.

**For example, instead of:**

“No, that definitely won’t work. That’s not how we do things.”

**You could say:**

“I like how you’re thinking about this differently. Perhaps we could incorporate your suggestion in the way we deliver this particular part of the project.”

# Collaboration

*When we work together, we go further*

Team collaboration fosters innovation and creates an inclusive, productive and positive environment. Understanding that you can teach or learn from others regardless of their role is key to working collaboratively towards a shared goal.

## Scenario

Sam, a Director, has called a meeting to discuss the progress on a project being managed by Melissa, Jordan, Erin and Scott. Part of the work is being delivered by a third party provider, and Melissa had some different suggestions on how to make this portion more engaging and practical. The day before, Melissa emailed Scott asking for the contact details of the person he’d been speaking to at the third party provider so she could put forward her ideas, but Scott never replied. At the meeting, Scott does most of the talking and uses “I” when he’s explaining the updates. When it comes to a discussion on the work done by the third party agency, Melissa mentions the email she’d sent to Scott the day before, to which Scott replies, “I completely missed that email, sorry! I was flat out yesterday working on the brief for the other part of the project. Don’t worry though, I’ve spoken to the third party provider and they’re clear on what’s needed.” Sam responds, “Great to hear you’re ahead with that brief, Scott. Thanks for managing the agency relationship as well, sounds like everything is on track.” Melissa leaves the meeting feeling unmotivated, and has trouble finding any enthusiasm for her work for the rest of the afternoon. This is not the first time Scott has commanded a meeting or withheld information from her, or other members of the team. After the meeting, Jordan and Erin tell Melissa they feel the same way, and are finding it hard to do their work.

How might your approach be different to Scott’s in order to shape a more positive and productive workplace?

**Respect:** Understand that one person can’t know everything, and different perspectives not only foster innovation, but are an indispensable part of working as a team. Everyone has different contributions to make, and everyone is entitled to make a contribution.

**Reflect:** Ask yourself some questions. What was my intention in that situation? Did I collaborate or was I being competitive? How can I benefit from a collaborative work environment? What can I learn from others in my team?

**Reset:** Adjust your mindset and understand that teamwork is not a competition. Find ways to help demonstrate their skills or achieve their goals, rather than hinder them. Set personal goals to better yourself, and find a win / win and work hard to identify it.

**For example, instead of:**

 “Don’t worry, I’ve done that already!”

**You could say:**

“I’d love to hear your suggestions on this, let’s discuss them with Sam since we have her here now, and then we can give the agency a call after this meeting.”

# Expectations

*I succeed when I’m accountable for the work I do and the way I behave*

For accountability to function, clear expectations need to be set, capabilities need to be understood, and clear and measurable milestones should be defined. It’s essential that honest, open feedback is provided during the process, and that people are given feedback on their performance. As a member of a team, taking accountability for your behaviour and the results you achieve will lead to greater success overall.

## Scenario

Kate is managing a long-term project that keeps missing the deadline for delivery, as she has not set a clear timeline on when specific activities must be done and how the project should be implemented. She blames other team members and the third party agency when her Director asks why the project is taking so long. The direction she gives to other team members is unclear and leaves other team members feeling frustrated and confused, and unable to perform their other tasks to the best of their ability. Despite the long lead times, everything is pushed onto other team members at the last minute, leaving them stressed, frazzled and unhappy that they are being forced to deliver work that is rushed and subpar.

How might your approach be different to Kate’s in order to shape a more positive and productive workplace?

**Respect:** Recognise the role you have within your team. Understand the impact your behaviour has on other team members, and realise there are consequences for failing to meet expectations.

**Reflect:** Ask yourself whether you or your team have the skills to meet the expectations and achieve results. What resources will they or I need? Are milestones being met? Is the feedback honest, open and ongoing? How am I creating a culture where people want to contribute and are accountable?

**Reset:** Change your mindset and take responsibility for clarifying your role and your accountabilities. Be clear about the desired outcome, how you will measure success, and how your team will achieve the objective. Stick to the milestone targets and embrace feedback. Give and receive fact-based, open and honest feedback.

**For example, instead of:**

 “I haven’t received the materials I need from the third party provider, and some other team members aren’t working quickly enough.”

**You could say:**

“As a member of this team, I accept responsibility for my behaviour, the results I achieve, and the deadlines I’ve missed. I know I need to set clearer targets and support my team in finding a solution when they are struggling to reach a deadline, and I will make sure they have the resources they need to achieve this.”

# Leadership

*I make a positive contribution to the team when I support others in reaching their goals*

As a leader, it’s important that you are a positive role model for your team, encouraging team members to openly discuss challenges and provide support where it’s needed. The impact of what leaders do is very influential, particularly when they ‘practice what they preach’. Ethical behaviour by leaders is associated with higher employee motivation and commitment, greater willingness to report problems to management, lower rates of sick leave, higher work satisfaction, and higher productivity.

## Scenario

Mike is on the frontline every day, serving the diverse needs of our community. He has recently completed an important task, and is typing up his notes to present to his direct report, Kevin. Before Mike can finish typing, Kevin yells across to him, “Where are your notes, what’s taking so long? Don’t think you’re filing them or doing anything with them until I’ve had a chance to approve them. They’d better be a vast improvement from the job you did last time!” Mike has often been the subject of Kevin’s verbal tirades, and is frequently yelled at in an open setting for other employees to hear. His experience as a member of the team is also not isolated or uncommon. Mike often lacks the confidence to perform to the best of his ability in his role, and has been taking more sick days than usual as he feels he can’t face the day ahead.

How might your approach be different to Kevin’s in order to shape a more positive and productive workplace?

**Respect:** Each member of your team possesses individual talents that need to be recognised and encouraged. Understand that you are a role model for your team, and the way you behave has a huge impact on their behaviour, their morale, and their work performance.

**Reflect:** Ask yourself if the way you’ve communicated feedback or direction can be considered supportive and reasonable. Have I set clear objectives and expectations? How might I step outside my immediate frustration and provide honest, constructive feedback and support? Do my behaviours and actions meet the standards of accountability I have set for my team? How can I foster a culture of innovation in my team, and help individuals develop their own leadership skills?

**Reset:** Transform your thinking and step into a positive frame. Give constructive feedback in the appropriate way. Encourage team members to openly discuss challenges and provide support where it’s needed. Ensure you are a positive role model, hold yourself accountable, and lead by example. Be the change you want to see in your team.

**For example, instead of:**

 “Where’s the report I asked for? It better be a vast improvement from the job you did last time!”

**You could say:**

“How are you going on that report? Did you need any help? I look forward to seeing the end result, I know you’ve worked hard on it.”

# Adapting

*When there is change we find ways to support each other, to adapt and learn new skills*

If you start to see change as an opportunity rather than a drawback, you will be able to see the potential that change might bring in your role. You can use change as an opportunity to seek clarity about what’s expected of you in my role, to learn new skills, and to see the bigger picture. As a leader, it’s important that you build the capability and resilience of your team during times of change.

## Scenario

Lucy is a Director and has just heard that her team’s budget has been cut and they will lose most of their resources. There is also talk that the office will be merging with another office that will sit under a different cluster. When she breaks the news to two mid-level members of her team, James and Kerry, she has not taken a moment to process the news or think clearly. She says, “I know you two have been trying your best, but it’s just not good enough. Obviously to lose this amount of resources means you aren’t doing your jobs properly.” James and Kerry leave feeling defeated, as they have been working their hardest. They are also afraid about what these changes mean for them. Kerry says, “I feel really insecure in my role. I feel like at any minute I’ll be told to pack up and go. Some days, every time I see Lucy coming up to me, I think, ‘Today’s the day.’” James agrees, and says, “I feel like I work really hard and it’s never going to be good enough because there are forces above me that I have no control over. I feel really insecure as well.” In a panic, both start to consider what they should do next, without hearing all the information.

How might your approach be different to Lucy’s in order to shape a more positive and productive workplace?

**Respect:** Understand that poor management of change, negative reactions and ‘catastrophic thinking’ has an extremely detrimental effect on your colleagues, and have been strongly associated with unreasonable behaviour. Recognise that change can in fact increase work satisfaction by clarifying roles and purposes, for you and for your colleagues.

**Reflect:** Ask yourself if you’re resisting change. How can I benefit from the changes occurring in my workplace? How can I support my team members to reduce the negative effects of change, and how can I communicate change well? What do I need to let go of to support the change?

**Reset:** See change as an opportunity to increase your job satisfaction. As the saying goes, with change comes opportunity. You can use this change to seek clarity about what’s expected of you in your role, to learn new skills, and to see the bigger picture. As a leader, it’s important that you build the capability and resilience of your team during times of change.

**For example, instead of:**

 “I’m sick of all this change. If people did their jobs properly, this wouldn’t happen.”

**You could say:**

“We’re being given a great opportunity to learn new skills in a new environment, and really expand and define our roles. I can’t wait to share the details once I have all the information.”

# Story telling

*The stories I tell can shape a positive and constructive workplace*

Whether you’re having a bad day at work, or you’ve heard a rumour, positively reframing the language you use in conversation will contribute to a happier and more productive work environment. It’s important to understand that gossip and negativity does not benefit you or your team members. As a leader, positive recognition of your team and leading by example is key. Open, honest and regular communication encourages a culture of respect and integrity that can lead to positive stories. In a positive and inclusive workplace culture, there is no place for negative stories.

## Scenario

Julie, Mike and Sarah are having a particularly busy day, and decide to take a quick tea break before starting on their next task. Julie tells Mike and Sarah that their fellow colleague, Colin, has failed to deliver on yet another deadline and has put down her suggestions for an upcoming assignment without providing any ideas of his own. Julie says she is sick of Colin never pulling his weight and always having to pick up the slack for him, and that some days she feels like just resigning. She feels that Colin gets special treatment from their manager, and communicates this with Mike and Sarah. Mike agrees, and shares several of his own anecdotes, saying “Colin is completely useless and I don’t know why he still has his job. The managers just turn a blind eye to his complete lack of work ethic.” Sarah says, “It’s really just a reflection of our entire workplace though, isn’t it? No wonder everyone is always stressed and the hard workers never get any recognition for how much they do.” All three go back to their desks feeling dejected and pessimistic about their next task and about their job in general.

How might your approach be different to Julie’s in order to shape a more positive and productive workplace?

**Respect:** Everyone has different working styles – some are more efficient than others. You can control your reaction to underperforming colleagues, but you cannot control their actions. However, perceiving them in a constantly negative light and expecting poor results from them can impact your own enthusiasm for your work, and the outlook of your other fellow colleagues.

**Reflect:** Ask yourself some questions. Is venting my frustrations helping my situation in the long run? Is it positively impacting my other colleagues’ perceptions of their own work? Is there a way I could frame this story in a way that invites problem solving and constructive suggestions?

**Reset:** Adapt your language and frame your experience in a way that will help both you and your colleagues reach a solution or come up with some different and more productive ways of approaching the issue.

**For example, instead of:**

 “I am so sick of picking up Colin’s slack, nothing ever changes around here.”

**You could say:**

“I feel frustrated by Colin’s actions, do you think I should ask him to grab a quick coffee with me to talk it over, or perhaps I should discuss a potential way forward with my manager or with HR?”

# Speaking up

*When I speak up openly and respectfully, I create a more positive and productive workplace*

A ‘speak up culture’ is an environment in which you feel safe to provide low key, informal feedback on behaviour you find to be unreasonable, either directly to the person who behaved that way, or to a manager or other intermediary you trust to do so on your behalf. Effectively building a positive, productive and inclusive workplace culture means being able to identify and act upon unreasonable behaviour. When you see something, say something.

## Scenario

Leah has noticed a change in Charlotte’s behaviour at work. She has become rude and snappy to other team members, missed multiple deadlines and sits at her desk listlessly most days. Leah has also noticed a change in Charlotte’s appearance; she has lost weight and has stopped wearing her usual formal wear and makeup. Leah sees her HR Manager, Tom, and Charlotte’s direct report, Eli, in a meeting room and asks if she can have a quick word. She sits down and says, “I’m a bit worried about Charlotte. She has been missing deadlines and does not seem her usual self. She has been quite rude to other team members and at times it feels like she’s being purposely unhelpful. I think something’s going on.” Tom says, “Thanks for bringing this to our attention, Leah, but I’m in the middle of a pretty crazy recruitment process and I have a separate report due tomorrow. I don’t have the time to deal with this right now.” Eli says, “Thanks Leah, but I haven’t noticed much difference about Charlotte. Are you sure she’s not just having a bad day? Whatever it is, she’s tough. I’m sure she’ll get through it.” Leah leaves feeling confused and unsure of what to do next. She wants to help Charlotte and she also wants to help her other team members.

How might your approach be different to Tom and Eli’s in order to shape a more positive and productive workplace?

**Respect:** Understand that encouraging a ‘speak up’ culture is essential in creating positive and productive workplaces. Unreasonable behaviour breeds negativity, and it’s important that all employees feel it’s safe to start a conversation about what they have seen.

**Reflect:** Ask yourself some questions. Am I ensuring that a positive and productive workplace is a top priority for me? Do I encourage others to speak up about behaviour? Am I providing and discussing frank and fearless advice, without fear of intimidation or other negative repercussions, and encouraging my colleagues to do the same?

**Reset:** Ensure your support of speaking up and creating a positive, safe culture is a top priority. Welcome rather than dismiss information on unreasonable behaviour, and see it as an opportunity to create a more open, respectful and productive workplace.

**For example, instead of:**

 “I’m really busy right now, are you sure she’s not just having a bad day?”

**You could say:**

“I really appreciate you bringing this to my attention. Let’s put time aside to discuss this thoroughly, after which I will set up a time to meet with Charlotte.”

# Learning environment

*When we learn from our mistakes and support each other, we are creating a positive workplace*

Mistakes are an opportunity to learn and improve. In a team environment, you can learn valuable lessons from your own and your colleagues’ mistakes, and support a culture where it is safe to make a mistake. By understanding that everyone makes mistakes, focusing on potential solutions rather than the obstacle, and taking responsibility for your own, you help to create a positive and productive workplace.

## Scenario

Lachlan has called Alicia into his office, as he’s just been told that Alicia has entered the wrong information on a form that will now have large consequences for their budget. Alicia brings in her notepad, thinking it’s just a regular catch up. Lachlan says, “Alicia, please explain to me why am I now completely over budget thanks to your foolish error. This was such a ridiculous mistake to make; did you not even bother to double check it? It just demonstrates to me that you’re completely careless. I don’t even want to hear your excuses, just make sure it never happens again.” Alicia has been going through a tough time at home, and leaves Lachlan’s office distraught.

How might your approach be different to Lachlan’s in order to shape a more positive and productive workplace?

**Respect:** Accept that everyone makes mistakes, and mistakes are an opportunity to learn and improve. Understand that you are making an even bigger mistake by reacting harshly. In a team environment, you can learn valuable lessons from your own and your colleagues’ mistakes, and it’s important to support a culture where it is safe to make an error.

**Reflect:** Ask yourself what you can learn from this mistake. Instead of blaming colleagues, how can I support them when they make mistakes? Can I coach others by sharing my experiences? How can I create a more supportive culture?

**Reset:** Adjust your mindset and your language so everyone can learn from the mistake in a positive and productive way. Take responsibility for how you react and behave when a mistake is made. Encourage your colleagues to have a go, and commit to focusing on what the team can learn and on potential solutions rather than the obstacle.

**For example, instead of:**

 “This is such a careless error, you’ve really messed things up for the team. Make sure it never happens again.”

**You could say:**

“Let’s take this as a learning experience. What would you do differently next time?” Allow your colleague to think about what they could have done differently, and then offer your advice. “Since we’re all about team work, perhaps a quick peer check in future would increase visibility and minimise the chance of things like this being overlooked? Not just for you, but everyone can benefit from sharing their work and just giving it a thorough once-over.”

# Acting early

*Spotting the warning signs and speaking up helps maintain a positive and inclusive workplace*

Early warning signs of bullying can surface as a one-off or isolated practice within a particular part of an organisation, whether in a particular team or as part of senior leadership culture. If left unaddressed it can spread to become the dominant culture of an organisation. If not addressed, bullying becomes a clear pointer to the standard of behaviour accepted by those in leadership roles and by employees.

## Scenario

Nathan has noticed recently that Susan has started to deliberately exclude a fellow colleague from meetings, informal discussions, and social events, including today’s team lunch. When Nathan asks Susan why their colleague wasn’t invited, Susan laughs it off, saying, “I don’t know, they’re just annoying to be around and they don’t really contribute anything. Trust me, I’m not the only one who thinks so! We also have absolutely nothing in common.” Nathan decides that’s an issue between Susan and their colleague to sort out, and decides to stay out of it.

How might your approach be different to Nathan’s in order to shape a more positive and productive workplace?

**Respect:** Understand the signs of unreasonable behaviour, one of which is deliberately excluding a member of the team. Respect your team mates and act on the warning signs as soon as they take place.

**Reflect:** Ask yourself if you took responsibility when you spotted the signs of unreasonable behaviour. Do I know what to look for? Who should I speak up to when I see the signs? Am I supportive of colleagues experiencing unreasonable behaviour?

**Reset:** Act early on unreasonable behaviour to create a more positive, productive and inclusive workplace culture. If you see something, say something. The behaviour you walk past is the behaviour you accept.

**For example, instead of:**

 “That’s nothing to do with me.”

 **You could say:**

“Susan, I’ve noticed you have been excluding our colleague from all our team activities. I would like to give you the opportunity to start including them, in order to make our working environment a more positive one. I take this seriously and I thought I would come to you first before speaking to our Director or HR.”