

# Building More Belonging



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## *Building More Belonging*

Fitting in feels good and, deep down, it's what we all want. Belonging to a group — whether at work or within our family or other special interests — satisfies our innate need for connection. Feelings of connection stimulate personal growth, fulfillment, and overall happiness. Discover the importance of belonging and what you can do to make others at work and in your community feel more included.

### The importance of belonging

Belonging is a fundamental and crucial aspect of human existence. It refers to feeling accepted, valued, and connected to a group, community, or society. The importance of belonging is demonstrated in several ways:

- 1. Emotional well-being:** Feeling as though we belong satisfies our inherent need for social connection and acceptance. When we feel a sense of belonging, we experience emotional security, support, and understanding. This contributes to overall emotional well-being and can help prevent feelings of loneliness, isolation, and depression.
- 2. Resilience:** Belonging furthers a sense of connection and purpose in the face of life's ups and downs, as it acts as a buffer against daily challenges and elevates resilience. When faced with difficulties or setbacks, knowing that we have a supportive network or community to rely on can offer security and help us cope effectively.
- 3. Identity and self-esteem:** Belonging helps shape our self-concept and self-esteem, provides a foundation for personal growth and development, and gives us a sense of identity and purpose. It's a framework for how we define ourselves and align with group values, beliefs, and norms.
- 4. Social support and relationships:** Belonging advances social connections and relationships that are essential for mental and physical health. This is because belonging to a community provides interaction and collaboration and offers a sense of collective identity and shared experiences. This enables us to find common ground, empathy, and support when needed.
- 5. Motivation and achievement:** Having a sense of belonging provides a supportive environment where we feel empowered to explore our potential and pursue goals. It increases engagement, cooperation, and productivity in our academic, professional, or personal endeavors. We're more motivated to participate in and actively contribute to our communities and groups when we feel we belong.

### Fostering more inclusion

Promoting more inclusion at work and in your personal life is a worthwhile goal that promotes diversity, equality, and a sense of belonging. Here are some ways you can do this:

- 1. Educate yourself:** Take the time to educate yourself about different cultures, identities, and perspectives. Read books, articles, and watch documentaries or movies that explore diverse experiences to help you better understand and appreciate different backgrounds.
- 2. Challenge your assumptions:** Be aware of your own biases and challenge any preconceived notions or stereotypes you may hold. Engage in self-reflection and actively seek to broaden your perspective.

3. **Actively listen:** Practice active listening by genuinely hearing and being understanding of others' viewpoints without interrupting or dismissing them. Create a safe space for open and respectful dialogue where everyone feels comfortable expressing their thoughts and opinions.
4. **Model a culture of respect:** Treat everyone with respect and dignity, regardless of their differences, and intervene if you witness discrimination or exclusionary behavior. Modeling this can encourage others to do the same.
5. **Advocate for inclusive policies:** Continuously challenge yourself to become more accepting and advocate for more inclusion, such as diversity programs, flexible work arrangements, and various opportunities for engaging with others.

Cultivating more belonging is a collective effort, and it begins on an individual level. Reach out to your Employee Assistance Program (EAP) for more information on what you can do to increase inclusivity in your work and personal life. Call any time, day or night, to speak with a consultant who can offer resources for creating a more equitable and accepting environment for everyone.

The EAP is a voluntary and confidential employee benefit available to eligible federal employees at no cost.

24 HOURS A DAY

**800-222-0364**

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