

Boosting Belonging

In a Diverse Workplace

Presented by your
Employee Assistance Program (EAP)



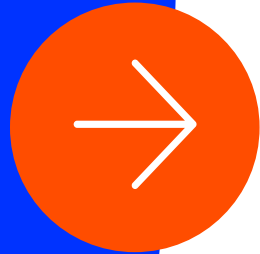
Seminar goals

- Learn what belonging looks and feels like in the workplace
- Explore ways our own mindset and actions can boost belonging at work
- Discover proactive ways of including others to create a culture of belonging
- Know the benefits of your Employee Assistance Program (EAP)

A sense of belonging

What does it feel like?

Trust	Valued
Invested	Safe
Accepted	Authentic
Respected	Loyalty
Treated fairly	Care
Appreciated	Connected
Encouraged	Commitment



What does this look like in the workplace?

Long-term commitment	Authenticity embraced
Diversity is encouraged	Strengths are developed
Differences are accepted, celebrated	Collaboration with others is the norm
Contributions equally valued	Conflict addressed effectively
Meaningful relationships with colleagues	Equitable access to resources, benefits

Belonging in the workplace

Belonging:

Feeling connected, supported, and respected for your true, authentic self in the workplace.

A sense of belonging is linked to:

- Better job performance, satisfaction
- Better physical health, fewer sick days
- Persistence and resilience

True belonging does not mean we all think, feel, and act the same way. It means that our differences are embraced and valued as part of the “whole.”



(Center for Creative Leadership (CCL), 2024; Bond, 2022; Twaronite, 2019)



When we don't belong...

Belonging uncertainty:

A state of mind in which one suffers from doubts about whether they are fully accepted (or ever could be).

- Can experience it in any situation
- Everyone experiences it
- Certain demographic groups may be more susceptible
- Can impact our perceptions, emotions, and behavior in the workplace

94% of workers surveyed agreed that a sense of belonging is important at work.

But belonging is not experienced universally:

- **1 in 5** workers report belonging uncertainty
- Belonging trends lower among **non-dominant** groups
- **30%** of workers report feeling unsupported due to some aspect of their identity

We all play a part



Do I feel like I belong?

- Do people notice me and what I do?
- Are there people I feel connected to?
- Do I feel valued and appreciated?
- Does it feel like people like me belong here?
- Do I feel comfortable just being myself?

Do I help others feel like they belong?

- Do I ask for others' point of view?
- Do I make an effort to connect with others, even those who aren't like me?
- Do I accept and value others' differences?
- Do I try to learn and/or appreciate the challenges of others?

A belonging mindset

Belonging basics:

- We all have a **basic need** to belong
- The workplace is a **community**
- Everyone has **something of value** to offer
- **Openness** is a crucial ingredient



How our brains get in the way



"Good driving means waiting your turn."

Cognitive bias

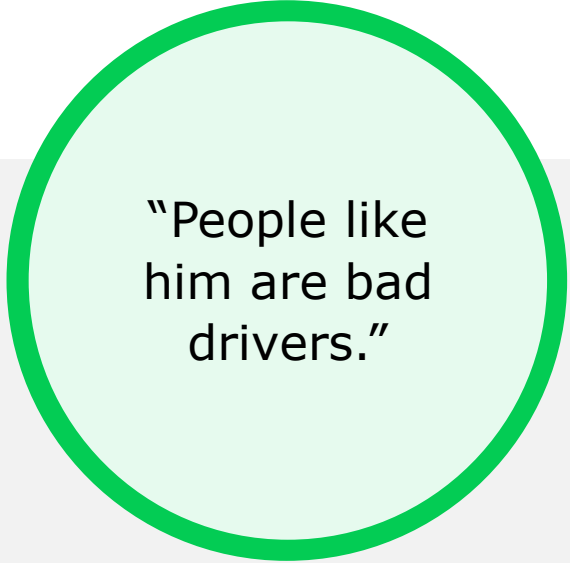
Mental "shortcuts" that help our brain make quick decisions, prioritize survival, and make sense of the world.



"He cut me off; what a bad driver!"

Fundamental attribution error

Blaming what are perceived to be "bad" behaviors on a person's character or abilities rather than their circumstances.



"People like him are bad drivers."

Stereotyping

Generalized beliefs about the characteristics, qualities, or abilities of entire groups of people.

Interrupting bias at work

- Acknowledge that you have bias
- Consider how they impact your behavior
- Question your beliefs, assumptions
- Seek to understand others' perspectives

Biases aren't inherently harmful; we all have them. But they can and do impact our behavior and perceptions of others in the workplace (and beyond).



Examples of bias at work:

- Designating a female colleague as the "notetaker" or with administrative tasks
- Assuming older people are unfamiliar with technology or slow to learn
- Considering a colleague lazy for taking prayer breaks during the workday.
- Assuming a disabled colleague always needs assistance or accommodation
- Labeling a colleague's sexual orientation based on their mannerisms
- Perceiving a neurodiverse colleague as odd, rude, or incapable of certain tasks
- Assuming a person with an accent can't speak or understand English

Identifying your core values

Be intentional with self-reflection:

- What kind of colleague do I want to be?
- What is important to me?
- How do I want others to perceive me?

Do regular self check-ins to see how your values evolve and whether your actions and decisions align with them.



Boosting belonging through engagement

- **Acknowledgement:** Recognize individuality
- **Connection:** Get personal
- **Curiosity:** Ask and listen
- **Respect:** Be polite, courteous



Small, trivial encounters matter a great deal. Being polite to others communicates a message: "You belong in the group of people to whom I should show respect."

Boosting belonging through appreciation

- **Perspectives:** Actively solicit others' ideas
- **Strengths:** Appreciation, utilization
- **Contributions:** Give recognition
- **Support:** Express gratitude



Authentic recognition is genuine, clear, and purposeful.
Avoid vague, blanket statements like, "You're great!"

Boosting belonging through friendship

- **Outreach:** Extend kindness, compassion
- **Authenticity:** Create a “safe” space
- **Teamwork:** Be a helper, collaborator
- **Mentorship:** Offer your strengths, talents



“You’re not alone.”

Teams made up of people who call themselves “friends” perform better, have better work/life balance, and feel less stress.

Working through challenges

- Expect and learn to handle missteps
- Call out hurtful or offensive words/actions
- Know when to go deeper
- Check defensiveness

You do not have to be best friends with your colleagues, but an inclusive environment means you respect, accept, and support them as teammates.



Example phrases in the moment:

- "That statement is hurtful to me because ____."
- "It sounded like you meant _____, is that right?"
- "I'd like to share with you how I heard that comment."

Example exploratory questions:

- "Can you tell me more about what you mean by that?"
- "Why do you feel that way?"
- "What has led you to believe that?"

Belonging is not about “fitting in.”

It's about **celebrating who you are** and the **unique qualities** you bring to the workplace.

**We all play a role in
boosting belonging at work!**



Benefits of the EAP

- Household benefit, prepaid by your employer
- Confidential, available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week
- Face-to-face or virtual counseling sessions
- Unlimited clinical telephonic support
- Digital platforms with secure text and video sessions
- Home life referrals, such as elder care, child care
- Financial and legal services*

Benefits vary by employer. Please check with your HR representative for your specific EAP benefits.

References

- American Psychological Association (APA) (2023). *2023 Work in America survey*. <https://www.apa.org/pubs/reports/work-in-america/2023-workplace-health-well-being>
- Anderson, J. (2023, March 3). A crisis of belonging [Audio podcast episode]. In *The Harvard Edcast*. Harvard Graduate School of Education <https://www.gse.harvard.edu/ideas/edcast/23/03/crisis-belonging>
- Beard, A. (2020, July-August). *True friends at work*. Harvard Business Review. <https://hbr.org/2020/07/true-friends-at-work>
- Bond, T. (2022, June 16). *Belonging in the workplace: What does it mean and why does it matter?* Great Place to Work. <https://www.greatplacetowork.com/resources/blog/belonging-in-the-workplace-what-does-it-mean-and-why-does-it-matter>
- Carr, E.W., Reece, A., Rosen Kellerman, G., & Robichaux, A. (2019, December 16). *The value of belonging at work*. Harvard Business Review. <https://hbr.org/2019/12/the-value-of-belonging-at-work>
- Center for Creative Leadership (2024, February 21). *How to build belonging at work*. <https://www.ccl.org/articles/leading-effectively-articles/create-better-culture-build-belonging-at-work/>
- Cherry, K. (2024, May 7). *How cognitive biases influence the way you think and act*. VeryWell Mind. <https://www.verywellmind.com/what-is-a-cognitive-bias-2794963>
- Cherry, K. (2023, April 6) *How to increase your sense of belonging*. VeryWell Mind. <https://www.verywellmind.com/what-is-the-need-to-belong-2795393>
- Cohen, G. (2023, April 12). *Geoffrey Cohen on belonging: The science of creating connection and bridging divides*. Stanford Education. <https://digitaleducation.stanford.edu/book-series/2023/Geoffrey-Cohen-belonging-science-creating-connection-bridging-divides>
- Cohen, G. (2022, October 10). *Understanding and overcoming belonging uncertainty*. Behavioral Scientist. <https://behavioralscientist.org/understanding-and-overcoming-belonging-uncertainty/>

References

- Collison, J. (2023, March 17). Coaching People to Connect [Audio webcast episode]. In *Called to Coach*. Gallup. <https://www.gallup.com/cliftonstrengths/en/505835/coaching-people-to-connect.aspx>
- Dutton, J. & Worline, M. (2023, October 24). *Four ways to create high-quality connections at work*. Greater Good Science Center. https://greatergood.berkeley.edu/article/item/four_ways_to_create_high_quality_connections_at_work
- Erickson, E., Moriaty, K., Klein, C., Longabaugh, J. & Weldon, R. (n.d.). *An examination of belonging trends in the workplace*. Workforce Science Associates. <https://workforcescience.com/learn/workforce-performance-lab/an-examination-of-belonging-trends-in-the-workplace/>
- Maese, E. & Lloyd, C. (2023, July 18). *Is your employee recognition really authentic?* Gallup. <https://www.gallup.com/workplace/508208/employee-recognition-really-authentic.aspx>
- Mills, K. (2022, September). Speaking of Psychology: How the need to belong drives human behavior, with Geoffrey L. Cohen, PhD [Audio podcast episode]. In *Speaking of Psychology*. American Psychological Association (APA). <https://www.apa.org/news/podcasts/speaking-of-psychology/human-behavior>
- Twaronite, K. (2019, May 11). *Five findings on the importance of belonging*. Ernst & Young Global Unlimited. https://www.ey.com/en_us/about-us/diversity-equity-inclusiveness/ey-belonging-barometer-workplace-study

Thank you!



All Cigna Healthcare products and services are provided exclusively by or through operating subsidiaries of The Cigna Group. All pictures are used for illustrative purposes only.

921417 09/24 © 2024 Cigna Healthcare. Some content provided under license.