

Adopt and Promote a Learning & Growth Culture

Creating a safe learning environment through a learning & growth approach is essential to creating a positive diversity & inclusion (D&I) climate. Without creating safety for learning and making mistakes, D&I initiatives run the risk of backfiring and making things worse.

Working with people who are different from us can be challenging. For many people, it is more than difficult – it feels threatening.

Having a growth & learning (vs. performance) mindset reduces this feeling of threat. It:

- Makes learning new skills less difficult.
- Reduces anxiety and makes people feel more comfortable.
- Increases interest in interacting with people from different social, demographic, cultural and generational groups and backgrounds.

Many people are afraid of appearing biased towards other groups. This reflects a performance orientation, which increases anxiety, avoidance of the topic, and sometimes hostility.

For true change, it has to be safe for people to make mistakes and learn from their mistakes, including mistakes in interactions with people in other groups.

A learning & growth mindset for inclusion and equity is a set of beliefs, an understanding that:

- It is possible to change our attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors.
- Bias is not inevitable; we can take steps to prevent biases from impacting us.
- Interactions with people who are different from us are opportunities to learn; they are not tests of our ability to be unbiased.

Mistakes or failures:

- Do not mean we are bad people; it means we are humans, fallible but capable of change.
- Give us the opportunity to learn better approaches and behaviors.
- Are an essential and necessary part of growth.



*“In a growth culture, people build their capacity to see through blind spots; acknowledge insecurities and shortcomings rather than unconsciously acting them out; and spend less energy defending their personal value so they have more energy available to create external value. **How people feel – and make other people feel – becomes as important as how much they know.**”*

Harvard Business Review