When Words Matter: Connection to DEIB Through Language

Presented by:
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Unpacking the Basics

Diversity

Who is represented on our team? What social identities are present?

Inclusion

Are all identities and perspectives valued, welcomed, respected, and represented throughout all levels of our team?

Belonging

Do team members sense they can be themselves, show up authentically, and feel like part of a community? Do they see themselves reflected and celebrated in ways that encourage them to thrive?
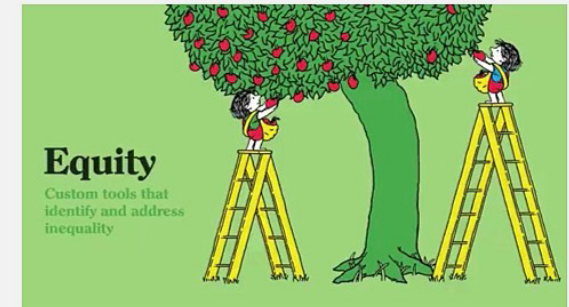
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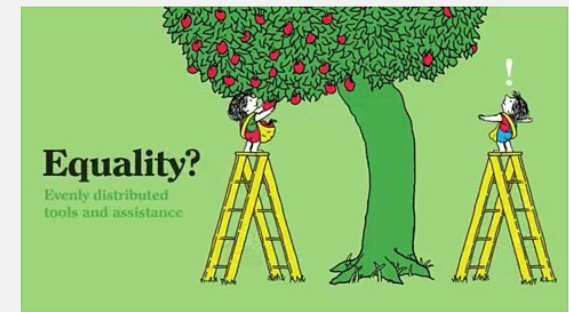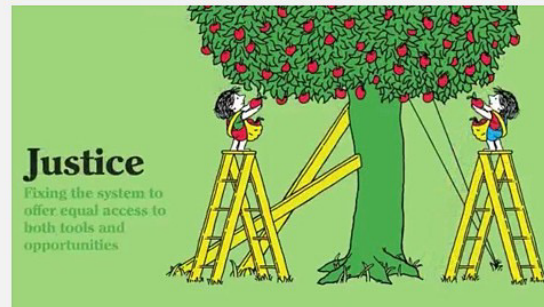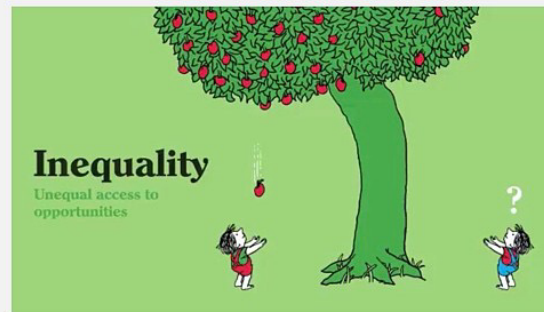
BEHAVIORS

EMOTIONAL CONNECTION

"Diversity is being invited to the party. Inclusion is being asked to dance." (Vernā Myers)

Unpacking the Basics

Equity

Do folks have access to opportunities, tools and/or resources that would ensure their participation and success?

STRUCTURE & SYSTEMS

Inequality — Unequal access to opportunities

Equality? — Evenly distributed tools and assistance

Justice — Fixing the system to offer equal access to both tools and opportunities

Equity — Custom tools that identify and address inequality

Tony Ruth, @lunchbreath

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Starting Points for Additional Key Terms

Race: Asian, Asian Pacific American, Native American, Latin(o/a)*, Black, White

Ethnicity: Chinese, Hawaiian, Apache, Guatemalan, Caribbean, Irish

Sexual Orientation: Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Heterosexual, Queer, Pansexual, Asexual

Gender: Woman, Man, Intersex, Transgender, Boi, Boy, Girl, Nonbinary, Femme, Genderqueer

Ability: People with disabilities (cognitive, emotional, physical, mental, etc.), neurodiverse, non-disabled person

Socio-economic Status: Poor, working class, middle class, low/high SES, high/low income, GED, High school education, post-secondary education, college degree, advanced or terminal degree

Language is fluid, dynamic, and constantly changing.
Respect people's actual language preferences and how THEY want & choose to be called.

Inclusive Language

Inclusive language seeks to treat all people with respect, dignity, and impartiality. It is constructed to bring everyone into the group and exclude no one.

It does ask something of us. It asks us to try **to change deeply embedded habits. To consider the implications of words and phrases that have long gone unchallenged. To dig deep into empathy and imagine an experience not our own.**

Courtney Seiter

An Incomplete Guide to Inclusive Language for Startups & Tech

Strategies & Techniques for Inclusive Language

- ❑ Use gender neutral language (e.g. folks > guys)
- ❑ Avoid marginalizing, demeaning, erasing, alienating, or using exclusionary terms, phrases, or jargon
- ❑ Don't lightly reference painful histories or experiences (e.g. "that's crazy")
- ❑ Pay attention to whether your phrasing assumes hierarchies, reinforces existing biases or stereotypes, disparages others, makes people invisible, or positions them as "less than" (e.g. "normal")
- ❑ Take the time to pronounce people's names
- ❑ Honor people's pronouns*
- ❑ If you're unsure or unclear, ask with reverence and respect
- ❑ If you make a mistake, apologize, ask how you can do better in the future, and follow-through
- ❑ Disrupt & interrupt when you hear or see something that could hurt someone

Common Scenarios

1. You're in match and everyone wants to win! You get so excited that you almost shout a word to the forward that you'll regret later. You're caught in the moment and want to motivate them to play harder. You've got 1 second to decide what to say. Do you say it? Do you not say it?

2. The other team wins the important match. You feel angry and disappointed. You want to express yourself by saying exactly what you mean. But you remember something from today's talk. What is that you remember? What do you do?

3. A new player joins your team. You hear one of your teammates say, "How are we supposed to relate to them? They're not even from around here and they don't look or act like us? Why is this weirdo even here?"

What's the problem(s) or challenge(s) in this situation? How could it impact the other person in the situation or people on your team? How would you use language to connect rather than disconnect?