

# Activity 1 Differences & Leadership

Many companies and organizations hold to following standards:

- ✚ Communicate clearly
- ✚ Treat everyone with dignity and respect
- ✚ Behave with integrity

These standards don't simply happen because the leader says they are important. If you're the "top dog" in your department or organization, how do you ensure that these standards are met? How comfortable are you in dealing with difficult situations? Specifically, what role do you play in dealing effectively with differences throughout the organization?



The following questions will help you investigate your own feelings about dealing with differences at work.

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- ✚ What message(s) do you communicate to your team about dealing with differences?
  - ✚ Do you walk your talk when it comes to dealing with differences? When others disagree with you, how do you make it safe for them? Do they feel safe to speak up, or do they keep quiet?
  - ✚ How do you encourage people to talk about differences when it relates to race, culture, and gender?
  - ✚ Do you typically handle conflicts about differences or do you let someone else resolve them?

## Activity 2 Differences & Communication

While we all know that differences exist, many of us are reluctant to talk about them. We are so afraid of offending or hurting someone's feelings that we keep our thoughts to ourselves.

In the program, feelings expressed by the dogs mirror the words and thoughts we often hear in the workplace. Some of these statements certainly stop people from talking about differences.



Which of the following have you heard in your workplace?

- ✎ We all get along just fine. Things would be better if everyone was more alike.
- ✎ Oh, please... spare me... I'm sure she's talented, but such a pain. I'd rather be with my own kind.
- ✎ I'm sorry... I feel really uncomfortable talking about this. I'm just going to lay low.
- ✎ Differences are not interesting—differences are difficult. We should just ignore the differences because they only cause trouble.
- ✎ I'm in charge and I'm determined that everyone get along. We can't let these differences be a problem. Ever!
- ✎ How can we ever deal with so many differences?

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How do these statements stop people from discussing differences?

What can you do to help start a conversation about differences?

## Activity 3 What's In It for Me?

Whenever we consider changing our behavior—particularly if it makes us uncomfortable—the first questions that typically arise are: “Why should I change?” and “What’s in it for me?”

What is in it for you? Let’s take a good hard look at that question.

Spend a few minutes and write down your responses to the following questions.

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- ✎ What will I gain from working with people who are similar to me?
  
- ✎ What will I be missing if I only work with people who are similar to me?
  
- ✎ What will I gain from working with people who are different from me?
  
- ✎ What will I have to give up to work effectively with others who are different from me?

# Activity 4 What's Wrong with These People?

One of the most common things people say when they are upset with others' behavior is "What's wrong with these people?"

Implicit in this question is an assumption that life would be better if everyone else behaved exactly how we think we would in the same situation. Because, deep down inside, we all carry a yardstick by which we evaluate others—and that yardstick is ourselves!

Most people are completely unaware of their internal yardstick. They genuinely do not understand why anyone would do something that seems so obviously "wrong."



Understanding ourselves is an important first step to understanding others. Reflect on your own assumptions about how other people should behave.

Briefly describe your feelings about the following:

- Keeping promises:
- Being on time:
- Helping others with their assignments:
- Working as a team player:
- Sharing or taking credit for work well done:
- Returning phone calls or emails:
- Talking about personal problems at work:

Make a short list of things you believe are inappropriate because you would never do them:

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