Accessibility, Inclusion, and Belonging

**Changing Mindset
Changing the Narrative
Foster Safety, Respect, Equity, and Belonging
*Presented by***
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The Torah doesn't say only some of us are created *B'tzelem Elohim*. It says we are all created *B'Tzelem Elohim*, in the Divine image. When you look into another person's eyes you won't wonder how to treat them. You will know.

Rabbi Norman M. Cohen
Commenting on B'raisheet 1:26-27

What gives you a sense of belonging in your workplace or community?

Part 1 Changing Mindsets

- How many people live with disability? 61 million. 1 in 4. Maybe more.
- Defining disability. Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) "[a] person who has a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activity."
- The Diversity of the Disability Community
- Three Facts: Anyone can acquire a disability from aging, an accident, trauma, and or/illness. The disability community is innovative and resilient. People with disabilities are diverse and part of all communities.
- Psychological Safety Culture is crucial to a sense of belonging, can lead to greater engagement and motivation, decision making and innovation.

- The Importance of Lived Experience. Nothing About Us Without Us.

Part 2 Changing the Narrative
- Ableism is Discrimination or prejudice against people with disabilities. The belief that typical abilities are superior. Stigma based on false beliefs, narratives, and attitudes about disability. Like other forms of oppression, ableism causes immense harm to people.
- Ableism shows up:
- Institutional ableism: Policies, job requirements, practices, physical environment, inaccessible tech
- Interpersonal ableism: Assumptions about ability and competence, patronization, doing FOR not WITH, creates obstacles for persons to request accommodations. Invisibility.
- The Danger of a Single Story. "The consequence of the single story is this: It robs people of dignity. It makes our recognition of our equal humanity difficult. It emphasizes how we are different rather than how we are similar."

Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie
TED Talk March 2014

Ask the Questions:
- What are some examples of ableism where you work?
- How might this mindset "other" employees and volunteers with disabilities?
- What are the effects of ableism on psychological safety? On participating? On being authentically oneself?

Talk About Disability
- **Say the word.** "Disability" is not a bad word!
- Don't use euphemisms like "differently-abled" or "special needs."
- Use "**nondisabled**" instead of "able-bodied" or "normal."
- Avoid passive, victim words.
- Use accurate, respectful language.

- Instead of "he suffers from cerebral palsy," use "he **has** cerebral palsy."
- Eliminate common ableist language: *Ex: Crazy*
- Instead of "confined to a wheelchair" or "wheelchair-**bound**," use "wheelchair **user**."
- Avoid referring to "the disabled" in the same way that you would avoid referring to "the Asians," "the Jews" or "the African-Americans." Instead, consider using such terms as "**the disability community**" or "**the disability activist**."
- Avoid "high-functioning" and "low-functioning" labels.
- People with disabilities should not be described as "inspirational" or "courageous" just because they have a disability.

NCDJ Disability Language Style Guide: http://ncdj.org/style-guide/

Part 3 Fostering Safety, Respect, Equity and Belonging
- Belonging in the workplace is a hallmark of a safe, respectful and equitable organization.
- Accessibility belongs in all aspects of your organization.
- More Than a Ramp. The design, construction, development, and maintenance of facilities, IT, programs, and/or services so that **all people**, including people with disabilities, can fully and independently use them. Access benefits everyone.

Universal Design Principles
- Equitable use
- Flexibility in use
- Simple and intuitive
- Perceptible information
- Tolerance for an error
- Low physical effort
- Size and space for approach and use
- Ensuring your intended audience can **fully participate** and/or **act on the information** being shared.

- Establish a culture of UD. Always ask people: What is your preferred communication style? How do you prefer to receive feedback?
- *With Zoom or other online platforms, turn on the caption function. People can opt in or out of using them as they choose.*
- Staff Access Survey

    In addition to asking new employees how they best communicate and receive feedback, RespectAbility recently administered a staff access survey

    - What Zoom functions help you stay engaged in meetings at RespectAbility?
    - What doesn't help you stay engaged in meetings?
    - What features are missing from Zoom meetings?
    - Rank your preferred methods of communication?
        - Email, phone call, zoom chat, meeting
- Elements that may make meetings accessible for some may be distracting to others
    - Cameras off

Psychological Safety in the Disability Community

- Disabled employees thrive in psychologically safe workplaces; retention increases by 5x in psychologically safe workplaces for employees with disabilities
    - These types of workplaces benefit all employees, but disabled employees specifically may feel comfortable expressing their unique skills, perspectives, talents, and lived experiences
- Promoting psychological safety may help enhance rates of disability disclosure
    - Employees should feel empowered to express themselves in the workplace
    - Neurodivergent people may choose not to mask their disability in psychologically safe environments.
    - Support Diverse Staff

- Support disabled employees by establishing employee resource groups (ERGs) and prioritizing accessibility in all ERG and Diversity Equity and Inclusion (DEI) events
- Encourage seeking and using accommodations to help one be more successful
- Check in with each person to see what they need
    - Remove physical and other barriers
    - Screen readers, captions, wheelchair accessibility
- It is important to always proactively ask employees what they need to be successful to create a psychologically safe workplace

Reasonable Accommodation
- Accommodations or "productivity enhancers" will help employers unlock the potential of their employees
- Ensuring equal opportunity in the application process
- Enabling a qualified individual with a disability to perform the essential functions of a job
- Making it possible for an employee with a disability to enjoy equal benefits and privileges of employment
- An employer is not required to make an accommodation if it would impose an "undue hardship" on the operation of the employer's business
    - Consider nature and cost of accommodation with respect to size, resources, nature, and structure of the employer's operation

Sample Accommodations Employees Should Know About
- Flexible schedule
    - Work optimally during hours of increased attentiveness
- Modified break schedule
    - Mental rest to refocus/reorient
- Rest area/private space
    - Space to rest, take medication or perform daily health activities
- Give clear, objective, and timely feedback.

- Use assistive technologies such as closed captioning ([zoom automatic captions](#))

Good intentions not followed by action are without value. It is the action which makes the intentions so profound.

Attributed to Ha'Yehudi HaKadosh

Turn Good Intentions into Action
What Are Your Next Steps?

- Imagine a belonging culture and mindset. What does this look like?
- Who is present? What makes individuals feel they belong?
- What resources do you need?
- Who are your partners?
- Identify an intention. What is your first action?