

A resource by HUE. Colour the Conversation

INCLUSIVE WORKPLACE Toolkit²⁰²²



An anti-oppressive guide grounded in lived experience that provides an introduction about different kinds of discrimination.

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This guide has been developed on many Aboriginal nations and so we as contributors and collaborators acknowledge that wherever we are on this continent is stolen Aboriginal land. Sovereignty has never been ceded and our work would not be possible without the fight, sacrifice, and strength of First Nations People. We collectively pay our respects to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Elders – past and present, and extend our respects to all Indigenous Elders for their sacrifices and strength.



Written by Maggie Munn

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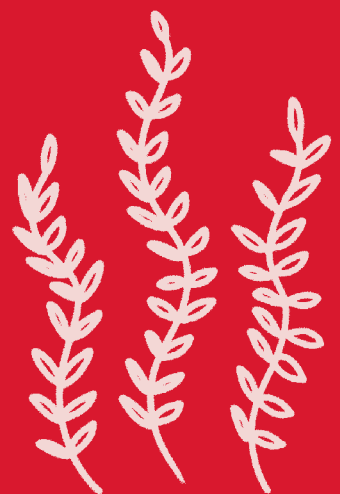
ABOUT THIS GUIDE

For people who experience oppression, the safety of our workplaces can be a key factor in our mental health and wellbeing. But creating safer workplaces can be challenging, it requires proactive senior leadership, supportive management and knowledgeable colleagues. Often, marginalised people are forced to educate and advocate for themselves in their workplaces, which can be exhausting.

This guide aims to make working towards a safer workplace more accessible, and to provide a starting point for addressing where these types of discrimination might be showing up in your organisation, both structurally, and interpersonally. Written by people with lived experience of these issues in the workplace, this guide can be used as a discussion tool, an induction material or a prompt to inform policy.

CONTENT WARNING

This guide contains mentions of racism, colonialism, queerphobia, transphobia, fatphobia, sexism & ableism.



HOWEVER YOU CHOOSE TO USE THIS GUIDE, HERE ARE SOME THINGS YOU SHOULD KEEP IN MIND:

These experiences don't exist in silos.

While each section of this guide pertains to a different system of oppression, many people live in the intersections of these experiences and may be impacted by multiple systems at once, culminating in new experiences of discrimination entirely. So, for example, the discrimination faced by a queer, East Asian woman, is not a product of each discrimination added together, but a whole new experience entirely. In this guide, every contributor is at the intersection of multiple systems of oppression, despite writing on one particular topic.

Lived experience is a form of expertise.

Living under a system of oppression gives a person incredible insight into how a system works, the harm it causes, and what is needed to challenge it. That is why we have chosen contributors who are not only deeply knowledgeable on these topics, but who have lived through these experiences.



AUTHOR BIO

Elsa Tuet-Rosenberg she/her

is a queer, Jewish and Chinese woman of colour. She is an educator, facilitator, activist and performer, with roots in the queer & Jewish, and QTPOC communities. She is the Cofounder & Director of *Hue*. Previously, she was the Director of Training at *Democracy in Colour*. In 2020 she was awarded one of *Out for Australia's* 30 under 30, and served two terms as a board member and co-chair of the QTPOC board committee at *Switchboard Victoria*.



THIS RESOURCE IS CREATED BY HUE.



Hue is a racial and social justice organisation that delivers training programs and bespoke consulting to organisations looking to challenge racism and other systems of oppression within their organisation. Hue believes in putting this work in the hands of the communities who are impacted by these systems, and paying them to do so. We use a bottom-up approach, where knowledge and power are accessed from within communities to inform organisations, not the other way around.

We believe that education is an essential part of systemic change and the dismantling of systems of oppression. Our training uses strengths-based and peer-to-peer learning frameworks, and develops understanding through group activities and facilitated conversations. We make this learning interactive, nuanced and fun, catering to a range of learning styles, knowledge levels, and personality types.

GET IN TOUCH



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WHAT IS COLONIALISM?

1.

Colonisation by definition refers to the process of settling in an area and establishing control over both the area and its Indigenous people. What we know it to be in practice is the invasion of our lands, the accompanying attempts to rid our lands of our people and our cultures, and the assertion of control over us, our lands, and our practices from cultural, spiritual, to physical. There is a misconception that colonisation in this country is a thing of the past: an event that happened. But colonisation is a process - it is fluid and has proven in many colonised lands to be a persistent weapon over us. When we talk about the impacts of colonisation today, we're referring to the flow-on effects of policies, behaviours, laws and practices that were implemented at the point of invasion that have transferred fluidly through decades to perpetuate the same control.

In this country, anyone who is not a First Nations Person has benefited in ways from the colonisation of these lands and our People. When we talk about decolonising, we refer to the process of unshackling ourselves from the intentions of colonial powers and oppressive governments and embracing our power and strength that has survived thousands of years from our old people, our ancestors, our grandparents and parents to us - it's an act of resilience and a slap in the face to colonisers that we exist to resist today.



DIFFERENCE BETWEEN ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS AND WELCOMES

Acknowledgements of Country are a way for people to take a moment to pay their respects to the Traditional Custodians of the Country they're meeting on. There's a difference between a *Welcome to Country* and an *Acknowledgement of Country*.

An acknowledgement can be performed by Indigenous and non-Indigenous people alike, whereas a Welcome to Country must be performed by an Elder of the Country you're gathered upon.

Acknowledgements should always include recognition that sovereignty has never been ceded. This is a vital thing to include because Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples have never given up their rights to self-govern, self-regulate, speak our language, practice our culture and have control over our lands, and affairs. These rights were taken from us when the British invaded. By acknowledging that sovereignty was never ceded, we recognise that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People have never given up our fight for freedom, treaty and self-determination.

For more information about terminology, and reasons behind Acknowledgements and more, please visit this website:

<https://www.narragunnawali.org.au/about/terminology-guide>



DON'TS

DOS

Ask someone *'what is your mob?'*

If you are curious about someone's relationship to Country, ask them if they feel comfortable telling you about their Country.

Use the terms *'black fulla'*, *'white fulla'*. This is our terminology and not appropriate. Same goes for *'gammin'*, *'deadly'*, *'truest'*, *'shame'*, *'mob'* or *'eya'*.

Find out what Country you're on, learn to correctly pronounce it and encourage your workmates to do the same.

Ask Aboriginal co-workers *'what percentage they are'*. Aboriginality is not quantifiable by numbers or percentage or in ways that white folks can understand. Aboriginality is your connection to culture, country and community. It's a state of mind. It is not okay to ask an Aboriginal person to justify their blackness to you.

Ask permission / gauge someone's emotional capacity before launching into a conversation with them.

Don't group us all together and erase our identities by using acronyms or abbreviations.

Be mindful that Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander People have unique identities

Let your Aboriginal co-workers know you're thinking of them when there's tough stuff happening in their communities, or around significant dates.

It's often the microaggressions that hurt the most.

ACTIONS YOUR WORKPLACE CAN TAKE

- ‡ **Allow cultural leave** to ensure that Aboriginal employees can take NAIDOC week or other culturally significant times off (including Sorry Business).
- ‡ **Give Aboriginal employees the option to work on January 26** – this one is important. For many Aboriginal people January 26 is spent with community, at marches or protests, or at home with family healing. However, some folks would prefer not to have a mandated day off but rather to work as any other day. Employers can have this conversation with their staff and make sure that buildings aren't locked or systems unavailable on this day.
- ‡ **Make standard practice that content warnings are included on any circulation of information/news** if it is concerning Aboriginal issues.
- ‡ If there is public/internal news that concerns Aboriginal people who have passed away, it should be standard practice to **include a warning that there may be names, pictures or voices of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander People who have passed away**. This is important because the mourning process is different across many groups and nations and it is all of our responsibility to respect that.
- ‡ **Understand that your Aboriginal employees won't always want to speak on Aboriginal issues** – please don't ask us to speak at your reconciliation week morning tea, or your Sorry Day liturgy just because we're black.
- ‡ **Include an acknowledgement in your email signature** – something as simple as identifying the land you're on and paying respect to the traditional owners.
For training on Acknowledging Country Meaningfully, Hue recommends: [YarnBark](#).
- ‡ **Processes like reparations and paying the rent** in so-called Australia is a way for settlers to both acknowledge and repay harm that's been done to the First Nations People of this continent. Structures and institutions of power and injustice do not serve or account for the strength of blackfullas in this place, and for allies and accomplices to acknowledge that and contribute to accountability is an important thing. In a workplace setting, it's critical to understand that organisations, companies and institutions conduct their business on stolen lands and any profit or success they make or have comes as a result of the dispossession and harm to Country and its people. A way for organisations to acknowledge that harm, and commit to truth telling and solidarity is to pay the rent or pay reparations.

Commit to truth telling and solidarity by paying the rent or reparations.

AUTHOR BIO

Maggie Munn they/them

Maggie is a queer, non-binary Gunggari femme based in Meanjin. Maggie's activism, advocacy and career is dedicated to the pursuit of justice for their people and they are vocal about the refusal to acknowledge institutionalised and systemic racism in the "justice" system towards Indigenous people. Maggie is committed to their personal process of decolonisation and radical blackness. They also enjoy footy, awful teenage rom-coms, coffee and watching Tik Toks of dogs doing silly things.

You can follow them on instagram [@maggiemunn](#) or twitter [@maggiemunn](#).



WHAT IS RACISM?

For starters, *race is a social construct based on a myth of biological difference*, and has been used to categorise people as ‘superior’ or ‘inferior’. These categories have been forged and maintained through oppression, segregation, slavery, conquest & colonisation. These distinctions have social purpose, rather than a biological basis.

Evidence of this can be seen in how these categories evolve. The ‘Jewish race’, for example, which was referred to commonly during WWII, is rarely referred to as a race anymore.



These categories are put in place by those in power, as a way of dividing and oppressing.

Racial prejudice + power = racism

Racism in Australia therefore, is the *systemic discrimination* against non-white people based on their perceived racial, cultural, religious or ethnic background.

While racism is sometimes misunderstood as **any** discrimination or prejudice based on ethnicity or culture, this definition doesn't account for the **distribution of power** and how this:

- ✦ jeopardises opportunities for work
- ✦ access to healthcare
- ✦ treatment by the justice system
- ✦ representation in organisations, parliament, tv and media, etc.

With this logic, '**reverse racism**' **cannot exist**, as it would require an inversion of the historical and systemic context that we are a part of in Australia.

Racism can come in many forms, covert or overt. This could be through obvious name calling or physical harm inflicted on Black and Brown folk, or it could be more insidious through reinforcing stereotypes, gaslighting or unconscious bias.



DON'TS

Don't ask anyone what their 'real name' is or if you can have an 'easier one' - this includes creating a nickname for someone without their consent.

It sounds obvious, but never use slurs, even if you're singing along to a song.

Avoid racist compliments:
'You're so pretty... for a Black girl'

This insinuates that Black women are not or cannot be pretty.

It's also pretty inappropriate to make comments on people's features in a workplace environment!

'Your English is so good!' -

If someone is speaking to you in a foreign accent, they are impressive enough to know two languages and are brave enough to do their job in their second.

Avoid unnecessarily bringing attention to the colour of someone's skin or their features:

'Look at my tan, I'm nearly as dark as you!' - cringe!

Don't ask to touch our hair and NEVER touch our hair without consent. We aren't puppies you can pet.

DOS

Use our names. If you struggle to pronounce it, spend a little time getting it right. Chances are that if you can say Tchaikovski, you can say Nguyen!

If you notice racism - challenge it!

Unpack your racism around westernised beauty standards.

If you're interested in our hair, a simple compliment saying it looks nice will suffice!

**Put in the work
and self reflect.**

ACTIONS YOUR WORKPLACE CAN TAKE

- ✦ Ask yourself first **if the work environment is safe** for people of colour to work in, and what might be some existing barriers?
- ✦ **Do not rely on the few people of colour** in your environment to do the emotional labour of making the place more inclusive and diverse. If you have a burning question, first ask yourself: 'Can I google this?'
- ✦ **Invest your time and energy into educating and training your team** on antiracism, or hire facilitators who can deliver this training in a safe and empowering way.
- ✦ **Create processes for staff members / clients to share grievances** without being undermined or having their experiences minimised. Consider hiring a mediator trained specifically in the needs of Black and Brown folk.
- ✦ **Think outside of the box** about ways you can uplift and support, but just as importantly, listen to your employees of colour when they are asking for support.
- ✦ When you hire Black and Brown people into a broken environment, you don't fix the culture, you break the people. Before you flood the gates and try to hire more people of colour to fix a lack of diversity, ensure that you have already asked yourself the above questions and set up those processes.

Racism comes in all shapes and sizes, and can often be ignored. Whilst *marginalised voices should lead the conversation*, it is the *role of an ally to put in the work and self reflect*, self-educate and acknowledge their part in these oppressive structures. It is then that you will be able to work towards dismantling the system that prevents everyone from truly thriving.

AUTHOR BIO

Miss Cairo she/her

Miss Cairo was born in England and has British, Egyptian and Sudanese Heritage. She is a queer, transgender immigrant and international cabaret superstar and is the founding director of *The People of Cabaret*, an organisation dedicated to amplify, uplift, nurture, support and platform artists who are Indigenous and / or Bla(c)k and / or people of colour in the cabaret and live performing arts sector.



WHAT IS QUEERPHOBIA?

Queerphobia is a *fear, hatred of, mistrust of, or discrimination against, people who are lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, asexual, intersex or pansexual (LGBTQAIP)*. It is rooted in longstanding patriarchal systems in western society, that privilege cisgender, heterosexual men and their relationships over others. *Queerphobia marginalises and suppresses* the identities and experiences of people who don't conform to this *mandatory heterosexuality*.



Queerphobia can manifest through the use of slurs and harmful language, conscious or unconscious discrimination, reinforcing heteronormativity, or outright violence, and it can destroy people's lives. LGBTQAIP people are more likely to attempt suicide or self harm. Young queer people are much more likely to have experienced homelessness than our straight peers. More than half of LGBTQAIP people have experienced homophobic abuse at work.

DON'TS

Use or allow others to use slurs for LGBTQAIP people, and don't allow 'gay' to be used to say something is negative.

In a similar vein, just because you hear queer people using a word to refer to ourselves, doesn't automatically mean it's OK for you to use. For example, I identify as, and am happy to be referred to as, queer. But for many LGBTQAIP people, this word is seen as a slur, so you shouldn't use it unless it's how someone's told you they identify.

Co-opt queer language to make yourself seem more inclusive. We already get enough brands throwing around 'Yaaassss queen' (which are already appropriated from black culture), when their actions are actually harming queer people. Please just let us have some things for ourselves!

Out queer people to others (inform another person about someone's gender or sexuality), whether in your workplace or outside of it, without their consent. You could out someone by adding them to a queer committee without asking, referring to a partner they haven't told others about yet in conversation, or asking their opinion 'as an LGBTQAIP person' in a meeting.

DOS

Stand up and say something if you hear discriminatory language being used. Even if it's 'just a joke'.

If in doubt, ask how people want to be referred to if you need to talk about their sexuality or gender.

Use inclusive language throughout your workplace, and encourage everyone to do the same. This includes things like not assuming the gender of people's partner(s) and using gender neutral pronouns (they/them/theirs). Some men have husbands and some women have wives and some people never want to have either!

Ask people what they are comfortable with others knowing and always get consent before involving people in identity-based conversations / initiatives.

LGBTQAIP people are more likely to attempt suicide or self harm.

DON'TS & DOS CONTINUED...

Doubt or question someone's identity. Having your identity erased hurts. Yes, we're still queer even when our partners are perceived to be the 'opposite' sex. Yes, we're still queer even when we look or sound just like every straight person. Yes, asexual people are queer. No, you can't tell if someone is really queer just by looking at or listening to them.

Always ask what language is best to use, and what is OK to use in front of some people and not in front of others.

ACTIONS YOUR WORKPLACE CAN TAKE

- ✦ **Take queerphobia seriously!** Make sure everyone who works with you knows that queerphobic language, discrimination, or violence will not be tolerated.
- ✦ **Have a clear accountability process** for both employees and outside contractors who are queerphobic, and ensure that the safety of queer people working with you is made a priority over maintaining business or personal relationships.
- ✦ **Review your hiring practices**, and make sure that there's no room for conscious or unconscious bias against queer people in the hiring process. Include queer people in interview panels, and take their input about candidates for jobs seriously. Mention in job ads that you encourage LGBTQAIP people to apply for roles.
- ✦ **Provide training for your employees** on being part of a queer-safe working environment. A lot of people have not grown up in an era or a culture where queerness is accepted and welcomed, so providing education about sexual orientation and gender identity can help them know how to be better allies of LGBTQAIP people.
- ✦ **Review your workplace policies** to ensure they aren't excluding or discriminating against queer people. Are your leave policies inclusive of all relationships, not just heterosexual marriages? Is your dress code gender neutral, and giving queer people the freedom to express themselves in a way that doesn't demand conformity to gendered norms?

Provide education about sexual orientation and gender identity.

AUTHOR BIO

Philly Marrii they/she

Philly Marrii is a queer, non-binary Blak writer from northern NSW. They are a long-time activist and campaigner to protect country, a workshop facilitator and public speaker and occasional spoken word artist.

You can follow their journey to reclaim a small piece of their country at ngurrmbaa.org, read some of their writing at *Overland*, or check them out on Instagram [@ngurrmbaa](https://www.instagram.com/ngurrmbaa).



WHAT IS TRANSPHOBIA?

Transphobia is a *pervasive system of oppression in which transgender people are discriminated against*. This doesn't always present itself in obvious ways, and is usually woven into the fabric of society and its institutions.



WHAT IS TRANSPHOBIA?

DON'TS

Use terms like *'tranny'*, *'transgendered'*, *'transvestite'*, *'transsexual'* or *'transgenderism'* (unless it is a particular word the person has asked to be used).

Ask invasive questions about a person's body or medical history - it's none of your business.

Assume people's pronouns.

Out people as trans or gender diverse in the workplace without their consent, or describe / define someone by their identity.

Use the person's former name or wrong pronoun.

Make a trans person feel guilty if you get their pronouns wrong, or make it a big deal and dwell on it.

Use language such as *'born a girl'*, *'used to be a man'*, *'became a woman'*, *'FtM'*, *'MtF'*.

Refer to someone as a *'transgender'* or people as *'transgenders'*.

Use the term *'preferred pronouns'*.

Assume all trans people have the same perspectives or lived experiences.

DOS

Use terms like *'transgender'*, *'trans'*, *'trans and gender diverse'*.

Ask respectful questions with the option for the person to not answer. Also do your own research about transition processes if you're curious.

Ask for people's pronouns, ideally by introducing your own first.

Consider whether it is ever appropriate to do this, ask people before disclosing their trans identity to anyone, also ask what language people use to describe themselves.

Use the name and pronoun a person uses, even if you make mistakes and even if it takes time to get it right - just keep trying.

Politely correct yourself, apologise and move on, we all make mistakes.

Use the language people use for themselves, the correct terms in this case are *'assigned female at birth'* and *'assigned male at birth'*, though these terms are rarely actually necessary to use.

They are a *transgender person*, *transgender woman*, *transgender man*, or *transgender people*.

Use the term *'pronouns'*, using the word *'preferred'* suggests that other pronouns might be okay as well, even if they're not.

Acknowledge the diversity of trans and gender diverse people and see each person as an individual.

It's okay to not be an expert at this stuff, but that's why it's great to have experts come in.

ACTIONS YOUR WORKPLACE CAN TAKE

- ✦ **Adding pronouns in email signatures and on nametags** is becoming common practice (quick, grab a pen and do it now!) but there also needs to be follow through! Practice introducing yourself with your pronouns, for example: 'Hi, I'm Michelle, I use she/her pronouns, what about you?' Normalising this will make it much easier for trans and gender diverse people. Be sure not to force people to disclose their pronouns though, as someone may not want to be out in the workplace, and that's also okay.
- ✦ **Create transition guidelines proactively.** This means staff can be well prepared to offer support to a trans person in a time that can be emotionally exhausting. These can incorporate processes for informing staff of a change of name / pronoun and easy ways to update personnel records to reflect these on e-mail addresses, business cards, administrative records and personnel directories both internal and external.
- ✦ **Get education and training!** It's okay to not be an expert at this stuff, but that's why it's great to have experts come in and conduct professional development (especially those with lived experience). Consider as a workplace also engaging in Rainbow Tick Accreditation which provides a benchmark for LGBTIQ+ inclusion in Australia.
- ✦ **Update benefits and entitlements schemes** to include important medical treatments and procedures such as mental health practitioners, gender affirmation surgeries, hormone therapies, speech therapies, etc. as well as paid leave for important appointments.
- ✦ **Make uniforms & dress codes** gender neutral and the same for all staff! If there are gendered options, ensure staff know they may wear whichever makes them feel great.
- ✦ **Ensure client forms have space for self-identification.** When taking client phone calls, don't make assumptions about a client's gender based on their voice. The more training staff have undergone (and the reading and work you do in your own time), the safer the environment will be for trans and gender diverse clients accessing services.

AUTHOR BIO

Nevo Zisin they/them

is a queer, non-binary, Jewish writer, performer, activist and public speaker based in Naarm/ Birraranga / Melbourne. They run workshops in schools and professional development trainings in workplaces around transgender identities. Author of award-winning *Finding Nevo* (2017), a memoir on gender transition and *The Pronoun Lowdown* (2021), a guidebook on all things gender related.

You can find more information about their workshops, personalised consultation and training at nevozisin.com or follow them on Instagram [@nevozisin](https://www.instagram.com/nevozisin)

If 'gender identity or expression' is included within your company's anti-discrimination policy (and it should be), then you've got some support for standing up against discrimination in the workplace. If you hear something that could be offensive at the expense of trans & gender diverse people - say something!



WHAT IS AGEISM?

OLDER PERSPECTIVE

Ageism is *discrimination, stereotyping and mistreatment based entirely on a person's age*. Older people are consistently portrayed as out of touch, absent minded, frail and worthless.

This leads to *a culture where older Australians find themselves excluded* from employment, access to finance and autonomy, access to technology, support services, are treated with disrespect, subjected to jokes about ageing or have their healthcare ignored.



DON'TS

Use ageist language such as *'of a certain age'*, *'young lady'*, *'over the hill'*, *'senior citizen'* (unless these are terms that have been explicitly stated are okay to use). Even being referred to as *'wise'* can have the effect of excluding or othering an older individual.

Make assumptions about people based on their age. For example, when as a volunteer I approached a manager to discuss whether to apply for a paid position in an organisation I was told that *'It would not be suitable for someone at your stage of life.'*

DOS

Use the term *'older'*. It is acceptable because everyone is older than someone else. Or the term *'experienced'* as it speaks to any age or context.

Encourage people to engage in opportunities regardless of their age.

Encourage people to engage in opportunities regardless of their age.



ACTIONS YOUR WORKPLACE CAN TAKE

- † Look at the workplace's resources, marketing, materials and ensure older people are involved and represented.
- † Ensure staff are supported to manage breaks and work load.
- † Ask how welcoming and friendly a workplace environment may be and whether positive ageing is promoted in the organisation.
- † Work toward eliminating any existing bias toward older people within the workplace.

AUTHOR BIO

Jane O'Hanlon she/her

Jane joined *WIRE* as a volunteer in 2007 and worked on the *Telephone Support Line* first as a phone worker and then as a team leader.

She has been employed by *WIRE* since 2019 in a number of different roles as part of the Service Delivery team both in the Walk in Centre and on the Telephone Support Line. In 2019/2020 they had the opportunity to work on the *Better Access for Women, Nonbinary and Gender Diverse People* over 50 project with another support worker, and produced an information booklet about better access that is available on the *WIRE* website.

YOUNGER PERSPECTIVE

Simply, *ageism is discrimination against someone on the basis of their age*. Ageism can be emphasised or de-emphasised by other layers of identity and perceived identity that people have - queer, disabled, BIPOC, poor, or any other marginalisation may result in the effects of ageism compounded further.

Young people are devalued within society and not taken seriously or respected because of their age, however ageism impacts those on both ends of the age spectrum. Acknowledging the duality of ageism is fundamental in eliminating its power.



Ageism exacerbates other layers of oppression, and is often seen as a more socially acceptable type of oppression, which means, when people use ageism as an excuse for discriminatory behaviour, it is more likely to be swept under the rug. No one will ever be entirely free of negative stereotypes held about other people, but

knowing you hold these views is the first step to actively fighting them. Go out of your way to make sure older and younger people are enshrined in positions of power in your work, and ensure that in spaces where they have been actively excluded, you go above and beyond to guarantee their space.

DON'TS

Use the term *'kids'* when speaking about teenagers or young adults. The term is condescending and erases the skills and voices of younger people.

Use unnecessary acronyms. These can keep people from understanding concepts, especially younger or older people and particularly those who are disabled or speak English as a second language.

DOS

Use terms like *'young people'*, *'younger people'*

Use clear and accessible language and use acronyms in their full form when mentioning them for the first time in a conversation / meeting.

ACTIONS YOUR WORKPLACE CAN TAKE

- † **Acknowledge the significant insight that lived experience provides**, especially when working with clients within younger or older populations - they are more likely to respond well to practitioners who they perceive as their peers.
- † **Include younger and older people in your interview panels for new roles.** This will mean that their lived experience can hold you more accountable, and is also more likely to recognise the skills and assets of the people you are interviewing.
- † **Pay young people for their work.** Often young people in advisory councils and co-design groups are expected to attend for the 'experience' or for some free pizza. Prove you are committed to actually valuing their work and experience by paying them adequately for their time.
- † **Read about various youth participation frameworks.** YACVic's YERP is a great place to start.
- † **Provide regular opportunities for feedback.** Make sure your workers, especially older and younger ones, know that it is safe to provide you with feedback about how you are supporting (or not) their groups of people. Actively take the feedback on board.
- † **Make time to acknowledge your biases.** You will absolutely hold negative views about older and younger people, actively spend time unpacking this, perhaps start workplace-wide conversations about this, brainstorm ways to avoid letting this interfere.

Include younger and older people in your interview panels for new roles.

AUTHOR BIO

Is Hay 

Is Hay is a queer and disabled young person working in the disability and youth sectors. They run trainings, working groups, focus groups and support sessions for young people, and aim to ensure they know their own power, so that when the rest of society doesn't give it to them, they know to challenge it.

You can find their writing at www.issyhaywriting.webnode.com



WHAT IS FATPHOBIA?

Fatphobia is an *irrational fear of, aversion to, dislike of, or conscious/unconscious discrimination against obesity/ people with obesity, or simply with the idea of being fat*. Fatphobia is a form of bigotry that *equates fatness with ugliness, laziness, inferiority and immorality, and presumes a fat body is one on the path to becoming a thin one*. This type of discrimination is pervasive and considered acceptable by general public and society.



DON'TS

Comment on a person's weight, whether large or small, and also don't comment on a weight increase or decrease (whether your intentions are congratulatory or not). You never know how a person became the size they are, or lost/gained weight, a certain size doesn't equate to being healthy (exceptions to this would be if they are encouraging you to congratulate them on weight loss/gain).

Give unsolicited weight loss advice, chances are they've already tried it.

It seems clear, but, don't call people anti-fat slurs, e.g. *fatty, whale, porker, fatso, big guy/boy/man*, etc.

People often forget saying fatphobic things about oneself (a very common example of fatphobia, e.g. *I feel so FAT today*) is harmful to people who are actually fat; feeling you look like a fat person shouldn't be framed as a bad thing

DOS

If necessary to discuss a person's size/weight, approach them politely and privately, and ask them how they like to be referred to in terms of their size/shape, e.g. I am so ok with being called fat/overweight and find labels like *"plus-size"* and *"curve"* a bit on the nose, but I know other people feel the complete opposite.

If discussions around these topics arise, have larger people in the room to discuss them, rather than a tiny insta-fitness coach preaching advice to a room of people who may feel uncomfortable already.

Remember, being fat isn't a bad thing, it's just something some people have more of!

Maybe work on saying some nice things about yourself instead! Don't air out the nasty things your inner critic says because it harms you and others around you.



ACTIONS YOUR WORKPLACE CAN TAKE

- ✦ **Ensure workspaces and chairs accommodate for and are accessible to a wide range of people** and their sizes - e.g avoid small areas to walk through, small chairs and unsteady chairs/ tables.
- ✦ **Make sure uniforms of a wide range of sizes are accessible for employees**, and that employees with larger bodies aren't required to pay more / experience extra hassle / fittings. If it is something a thinner bodied person doesn't have to worry about, fat people shouldn't have to worry about it either, we shouldn't be punished for being fat.
- ✦ **Don't tell people to change their bodies for work**, that includes listing for thinner people in a brief/ casting, unless it is absolutely necessary for the role (and even then why would that be).
- ✦ **Make sure you aren't judging a person's work wear harsher because of their size**, compare the uniform items to a thin person's, do you just consider it unacceptable workwear because they are overweight? This also goes for a judgement of the quality / quantity of their work, don't assume a work ethic or ability based on size, a common and harmful one is fat=lazy.
- ✦ **Avoid having a bias to words that aren't offensive**; fat isn't an offensive entity unless you make it one, an example of this is people saying things like 'no you aren't fat,' meaning it to be a compliment, when it isn't!

Fat isn't an offensive word unless you make it one.

AUTHOR BIO

Milo Hartill she/her

Milo is a queer performer of musical theatre and burlesque, a model, content creator / influencer and radical body acceptance / BLM activist and advocate. She is an ex-WAAPA Musical Theatre Diploma student and current Bachelor of Fine Arts student at VCA. Milo is passionate about making statements with art and with her body, a body which in western society and theatre has been made to feel outcast and unwanted, and show why we need diversity of all kinds on our stages!

To find more of her content, work and further discussions on these topics, you can follow her on Instagram [@milohartill](#).

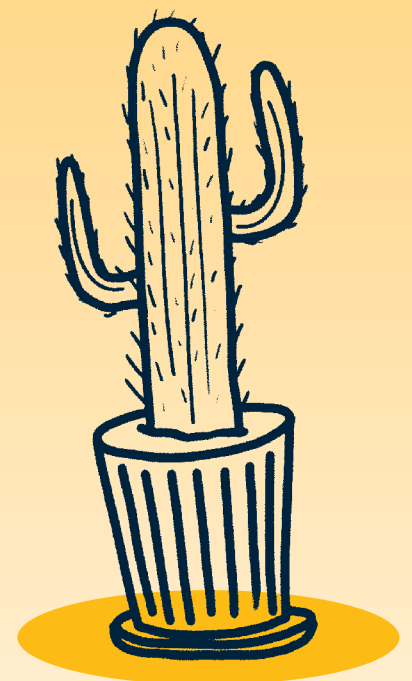


WHAT IS CLASSISM?

Classism (or class discrimination) is a *form of prejudice or discrimination against individuals or groups of people based on their social class or their perceived social class, typically impacting those from a low-socioeconomic status* (such as the proletariat/working class), and intersects with other forms of discrimination (racism, homophobia, transphobia, etc). Classism is seen in everyday life in institutional, cultural or individual practices and beliefs that *rank and position people or groups based on their perceived labour value* to a capitalist society which creates inequality and leads to basic human needs being unmet.



Class informs every aspect of our behaviour, the ways we are treated in society and the *opportunities that are afforded to us, such as housing, education, occupational status, income, wealth and power*. We've all heard stereotypes that equate hard work with wealth, and myths around unskilled/non-essential labour which the bourgeoisie/ruling class use to justify exploitation and poverty wages. However, throughout the COVID-19 pandemic *we have learnt who our essential workers really are*, typically underpaid and overworked people such as migrant workers, children of migrant workers, refugees, international or disadvantaged students, whose jobs are devalued when they are the ones we require the most (childcare, nursing, food delivery, farmers, supermarket workers).



DON'TS

Gaslighting poor people into *'working harder'* to *'succeed'* and earn a liveable wage. The hardest workers in our society are often the poorest or are paid poverty wages, people who often have to take longer hours, more days or second and third jobs to make ends meet. One of the biggest myths of capitalism is that people are rewarded with wealth for their hard work and productivity. Hard work rarely, if ever, results in wealth. Wealth isn't a result of hard work but of the exploitation of workers and the hoarding of wealth.

Seems obvious but don't use class-related or anti-poor slurs or make comments on people's attire or how they present, such as *'ghetto'*, *'bogan'*, *'trailer park trash'*, *'povo'*, *'hobo'*, etc.

Use language designed to empower people if that language is not accessible to the people you're attempting to empower. This often leads to policing the very people you're attempting to empower for the language they are using, for example: using *unhoused/houseless* instead of *homeless*. This performative language markets itself as being beneficial to disadvantaged people or communities, when actually it's just a way to make language more palatable for privileged people who don't experience this sort of discrimination. Often these vulnerable communities don't care for the *'progressive'* or *'politically correct'* wording of their circumstances, experiences or situations and instead require real action and changes, like access to free, affordable and safe housing. So ask yourself who's really benefiting from the language you use.

Employers should stop interrogating people about their time off work (or missing years in our resumes). People who experience poverty and low-socioeconomic status suffer disparities within the health (psychological and physical), education and employment sectors.

Throughout the COVID-19 pandemic we have learnt who our essential workers really are.

DOS

Centre those who are experiencing poverty or low-socioeconomic status and who have first-hand experience whenever there are discussions around classism.

If necessary, using terms like *'people experiencing poverty'*, *'low-socioeconomic status'*, *'first-hand experience of class discrimination'*.

Use accessible language, provide accessible programs, etc. It's as simple as opting out of using *'fancy'* or big words and vocabulary, or using slang words or phrases that some people won't understand. This does not mean oversimplifying language.

Also let people use whatever language feels good for them to speak of their own experiences.

Recognise that lived experience and real-life skills can contribute significantly to a workforce. Formal work experience should not be all that's acknowledged in choosing a good candidate for a role.

Centre lived experience when you are offering services for communities who understand the complexities of class discrimination. Ask them what they need, listen to what they say. There's no point offering services that don't directly address real lived realities.

ACTIONS YOUR WORKPLACE CAN TAKE

- ‡ **Provide compulsory work uniforms or equipment to employees who may not have the means to access them**, especially if they're expected to be of a high quality.
- ‡ **Provide employees with accessible transport or reimbursement for transport costs**, whether that be public transport, petrol allowances, parking, etc.
- ‡ **Dedicate time to training people for the job**, and be conscious of how recruitment strategies or requirements can exclude working class people (tertiary education, unpaid volunteering, internships, experience is held to a higher regard, despite not being accessible to everyone). It's become increasingly difficult for people to secure even entry level jobs without having some sort of experience (eg. retail jobs that say you need a minimum two years retail experience, when workplaces aren't willing to train you).
- ‡ **Avoid nepotism**. Some people get opportunities based solely on who they know or the connections they have, meaning working class people are overlooked for certain roles which they could be more qualified for or better at. With power comes connections, and unfortunately working class people don't have the same opportunities or connections as those in the ruling class. We all know at least one unqualified manager/boss/etc. who only got that job because their parent is the owner or CEO, even though there is someone else who has dedicated a lot more time to earning that promotion or is a lot more qualified than they are.

AUTHOR BIO

Zee Mazloum (they/them)

is a queer, Arab person of colour. They are an artist, activist and community organiser who has lived experience in a working class family with a poor/low-socioeconomic background. Zee does a lot of community work and mutual aid within disadvantaged and marginalised communities, particularly with an organisation called *Community Union Defence League (CUDL)* who host weekly street kitchens on Saturdays and Sundays, and provide free home-cooked meals and essential items to people in need as well as providing other services.

To find more of their work or content you can check them out on Instagram: [@existentialcrisis_](#) or [@zmzlm](#) or follow the organisation [@cudlmelbourne](#)



WHAT IS SEXISM?

Sexism is prejudice or discrimination based on sex or gender. Sexist beliefs perpetuate stereotypes of social gender roles and abilities. Sexism affects and is harmful to all genders, however, because patriarchal structures value masculinity and devalue femininity, men are given disproportionate institutional power over other genders. Sexism does not only impact cis women, but trans women, non-binary people and people who are gender non-conforming.

When value is placed higher on one gender over another— be it in family, media, policy, social circles or law—sexism occurs. This applies whether the person or institution meant to cause harm or not.

Men are also impacted by sexism, however, due to influences of the patriarchy in many societies around the world, the harm that they experience is usually an indirect result of sexism toward women. For example, when men are told they shouldn't be emotional or vulnerable because it is “girly” or “gay”, they are also being impacted by the sexist, homophobic (these two are closely related) and negative attitudes towards women and femininity.



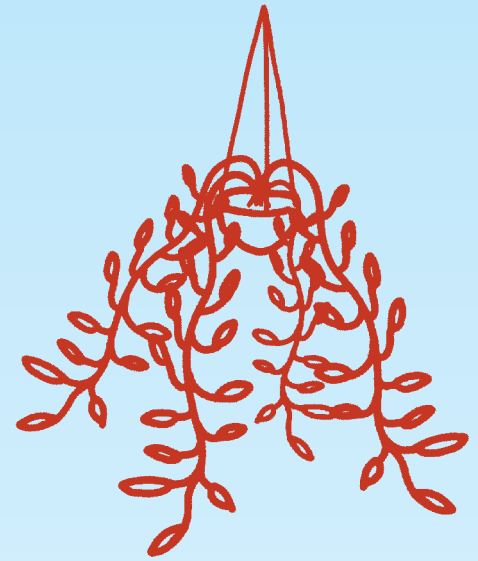
Sexism exists all around us in society, in both micro and macro ways.

MICRO:

- † **How children are raised**– boys being encouraged to play with trucks, cars, and forced to like the colour blue. While girls are dressed in dresses and skirts, discouraged from participating in sports and encouraged to be polite and 'good'.
- † **In the home**- Where women perform more unpaid work than men (housework, looking after children).

MACRO:

- † **Policy**- Gender discrimination reflected in the policies and practices of organizations such as governments, workplaces, public institutions (like schools or health care), and financial institutions e.g., Pay gap.
- † **Advertising**- Women being sexualised and reduced to their bodies, while men portrayed as 'strong'.
- † **In the justice system**- lack of belief of women when dealing with cases of sexual violence.



Sexism in the workplace reduces people to a stereotype, one that limits their ability to totally thrive in a workplace, and does not see individuals as completely capable.

DON'TS

Use sexist language like *"That's not how ladies should behave"* OR *"men do not cry"*.

Assign roles or tasks to people according to stereotypical gender roles.

Avoid using *"man"* as a noun when you are really referring to people.

DOS

Just allow people to be who they are.

Society puts enough pressure on people to perform; so in the workplace, do not place boundaries on how people should and shouldn't be themselves.

Assume everyone you've hired has the ability to do the tasks that you hired them to do; chances are, you've hired some awesome and capable people.

Use neutral titles in the workplace. E.g., **Fireman**. Fireperson is awkward, but 'firefighter' is not.

DON'TS & DOS CONTINUED...

Put into question a person's ability to do their job due to personal circumstances such as period, pregnancy, etc.

Be compassionate and empathetic to people's personal circumstances, but do not give your opinion or assume what they need. Allow them to dictate what they may need, and act accordingly with fair workplace policies.

Equate a woman's anger and or frustration as a symptom of 'PMS'.

Instead of invalidating how she feels, you can:

- ✦ Listen (shocker!)
- ✦ Give space
- ✦ Respect her anger

'Mansplain' a woman at work, especially when she didn't ask you for your help and or opinion.

If your opinion is asked for, then avoid condescending tones, and do not use terms like "sweetie" and "honey".

Make sexist jokes and say "it's just a joooooke, you can't take a joke" when clearly it was offensive.

Accept your joke wasn't funny, apologise, and refrain from making unfunny, sexist jokes that you recycled from an old 90s movie.

Undermine the importance of emotional intelligence, care work, warmth, kindness, and other typically "feminised qualities".

Unlearn the value systems that say traits that are considered masculine are superior or inherently better for leadership.

Women being sexualised and reduced to their bodies, while men portrayed as 'strong'

AUTHOR BIO

Henrietta Aमेvor she/her


is a Ghanaian-Australian woman, actor, writer, creator and facilitator. Henrietta's passions lie in her ability to tell stories that reflect her identity and communities, facilitate spaces that can foster open learning and understanding, and do it with truth and compassion.

Henrietta is passionate about seeing an Australia where young First Nations, African, refugee and migrant voices are meaningfully heard and represented in decision making spaces and in mainstream media.



WHAT IS ABLEISM?

Ableism is the discrimination towards people with disability. It can be bigotry - such as a dislike or hate towards disabled individuals or communities for simply existing - feelings that we are a drain on society and don't contribute anything worthwhile.

Or it can be indirect through lack of providing an accessible workplace (physically, virtually or through content/policies/practices/procedures), lack of knowledge or understanding of disability needs or having a mindset where disabled people are an inconvenience or problem! Often ableism stems from the Medical Model of Disability, which is the systemic societal assumption/view that disabled people are 'problems' to be solved, that they are 'broken and need to be fixed', and that they are disabled as a result of their disability, rather than the accessibility of society around them. An example is perceiving a person who uses a wheelchair as 'sad' or 'broken' for not being able to walk/walk properly rather than recognising that a wheelchair may actually be a tool for independence and safety. And that with an accessible society (i.e. wheelchair accessibility) and more welcoming attitudes towards disability, that disabled people can and actually do participate in society, living and leading fulfilling lives. 

IDENTITY-FIRST OR PERSON-FIRST?

Disability language can be person- first (i.e. person or people with disability) or identity-first (disabled person, neurodivergent person, Autistic person, d/Deaf people) - more often than not, official organisations and academia will use person-first language to reinforce that disabled people are 'people first and foremost' and reiterates that 'people with disability are not jars to be labelled'. However, most people with disability do prefer (based on my own lived experience and through co-design) identity-first language as a way of reclaiming disability and recognising that disability and being disabled aren't bad things and are a natural part of being alive. Everyone is different and an easy way to determine what someone's preference is by asking them. Many disabled people (like myself) use both language types interchangeably.

Everyone is different and an easy way to determine what someone's preference is by asking them.

DON'TS

Do not use disabled slurs such as the R (i.e. retarded) word, M (i.e. moron) words and whilst used very commonly in everyday life, the following words are also disability slurs and should be avoided. These words victimise, dehumanise or trivialise the experience of disability.

Stupid, Idiot, Crazy, Insane, Dumb, Lame, Spaz, Lunatic, Maniac

Avoid using euphemisms for the words disability or disabled. By avoiding these words, you are further perpetuating ableism by viewing disability or being disabled as bad or dirty

Avoid using disabilities as an adjective or terms that perpetuate negativity around disability

"Fallen on deaf ears"

"It's a crippling economy"

"Blind leading the blind"

"I'm so OCD!"

"You're being tone deaf"

"The comedian was hysterically funny!"

"Blinded by love" "Blinded by ignorance"

"Our prices are crazy!"

DOS

Recognise the diversity and different types of disabilities that can and do exist (physical, sensory, developmental, learning, intellectual disabilities)

Recognise that intersectionality (the ways that different marginalised characteristics that people have) can all interconnect and relate to each other, especially for people with disabilities

Better alternatives:

"Have refused to listen"

"It's a classist / oppressive / difficult economy"

"I'm really particular about this."

"This is a bit out of touch with the needs of the community"

"The comedian was hilarious!"

"Our prices are out of this world!" or "Our prices are beyond belief!"

DON'TS & DOS CONTINUED...

Avoid pitying and disempowering language:

Disabled people are often described in ways that are disempowering, discriminatory, degrading and offensive such as a 'victim' or 'sufferer' of their disability, which reinforces stereotypes that people with disability are unhappy about our lives, wish we were 'normal', and should be viewed as objects of pity.

- ✦ Sufferer or chronic pain or paraplegia
- ✦ Wheelchair-bound/Confined to wheelchair

Better alternatives:

- ✦ Living with chronic pain or paraplegia
- ✦ Wheelchair User

Disability inclusion is crucial to an inclusive community and society. 1 in 5 Australians live with disability and 15% of the world's population live with some kind of disability, which is over a billion people.

ACTIONS YOUR WORKPLACE CAN TAKE

- ✦ **Commit to ensuring a safe and welcoming environment to all employees**, present and future to ensure that anyone who chooses to disclose they have a disability or are requiring support for their access needs, feel supported and recognised.
- ✦ **Update your policies, processes and HR procedures** to reduce ableism in your workplace. Policies should include:
 - ◇ Accessibility and Disability
 - ◇ Diversity, Equity and Inclusion
 - ◇ Reasonable Adjustments and Access Needs
 - ◇ Remote working arrangements
- ✦ **Provide accessibility, disability, intersectionality and inclusion training** to your staff. This can help ensure that the staff are welcoming and supportive of both colleagues or clients who have disabilities but also help to ensure they can provide accessible workspaces and content (i.e. physically accessible workplace but also virtually accessible workplace).

Disabled people can be an extremely valuable member of your workplace and the community. They have diverse lived experience and there are overwhelming statistics about the benefits of workplaces with disability representation and diversity! Hiring people with disabilities should not be viewed as laborious, a liability or costly to an organisation, but an opportunity to grow your workforce in a unique way! There is extensive research that shows there are numerous benefits (financially, ethically, morally) to hiring disabled people. For example, some studies have found that diverse teams with disabled people have effectiveness almost 30x greater than without diverse and disabled team members.¹

¹ www.dca.org.au/media-releases/australians-disability-among-most-discriminated-work

AUTHOR BIO

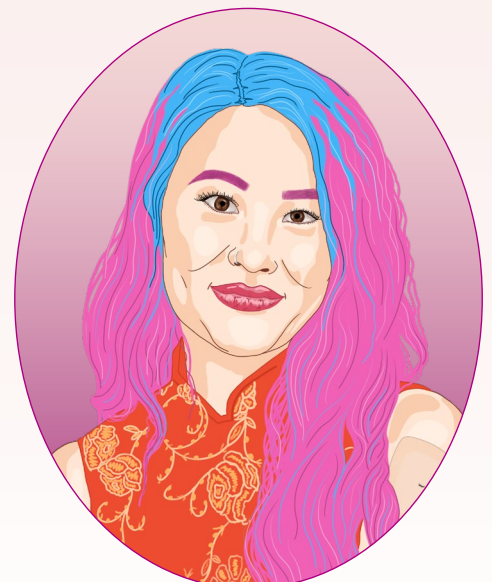
Akii *they/them*

is a community leader and internationally awarded, multi-award-winning disability and gender equity advocate and activist who is deeply passionate about disability rights, anti-racism work and representation. They are a proud, young, disabled, trans non-binary femme and queer person of colour.

Akii is the Accessibility Manager at *Sydney WordPride*, *Mardi Gras* and a Senior Co-design and Engagement Advisor at the *NDIA*. Akii is also a highly experienced Accessibility and Intersectionality trainer and educator, highly sought-out keynote presenter, a comprehensive multi-disciplinary consultant for projects in the gender equity, violence prevention, LGBTIQ+, health and human rights sectors. They are also a Councilor on the *Victorian Disability Council*.

Akii is also an experienced, agency-represented and internationally published model and actor – working to challenge the perception and create a positive change within the media, fashion and beauty industry for appearance diversity (i.e. surgical scars), disabled individuals, mobility aids, trans, gender-diverse and POC communities.

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WHAT IS NEURODIVERSITY?

*Neurodiversity describes a difference in thinking (neurology) across a group of people. Individuals can be **neurodivergent at birth** as in autistic people, people with ADHD and people with dyslexia and other learning disabilities, (even though these may not be identified until later in life), or they can **become neurodivergent due to acquired brain injuries or trauma**.. Neurodivergence is usually identified through interviews but changes to the brain can be seen on scans. Some people also consider conditions such as epilepsy and Tourette's a form of neurodivergence.*

*Neurodivergence is different from mental illness. Although some neurodivergent people may also experience mental distress from trying to operate in a neurotypical world, **being neurodivergent in and of itself is just a different way of perceiving, interacting with and processing the world and communication from other people.***



DON'TS

DOS

Use terms like *'high-functioning'* / *'low-functioning'* / *'very autistic'* / *'a little autistic'*. This medicalised language has been rejected by many autistic adults who point out that autism either is or isn't present and that the 'function' levels often refer to a person's ability to meet ableist standards of performance in a workplace.

Although some people with disabilities prefer *'person-first'* language, many autistic people prefer *'identity first'* language (that is, *'autistic person'* rather than *'person with autism'*).

Use terms like *'retard'* / *'leftard'*. Anything using the suffix *'tard'* is short-hand for the term *'retarded'* which is a derogatory term and should not be used at all.

Use terms like *'learning difficulties'* / *'learning disabilities'* / *'learning differences'*. Keep in mind that some people with dyslexia, dysgraphia, dyscalculia and dyspraxia will consider their issues a disability, while others will consider it a difficulty that interferes with their processing of words, numbers or writing, but will not consider themselves disabled.

'Everyone is a little autistic' - this diminishes the real challenges that autistic people face in a workplace that is not built for autistic thinking.

Recognise the unique needs and experiences of autistic people in the workplace / in the world and listen to autistic people when they have requests for creating a safer working environment.

Refer to Rainman / Forrest Gump etc. Referring to neurodivergent people via reference to stereotypical film characters is reductive and highly problematic.

Interact with people as unique and complex individuals without reducing them to stereotypes.

ACTIONS YOUR WORKPLACE CAN TAKE

- † **Create policies for neurodiversity that describe broad accommodations rather than specific ones**, for example, you might say, 'All efforts will be made to meet reasonable accommodation requests for meetings, including but not limited to: attention-management requirements, accommodations for learning disabilities, and advance notice.' rather than identifying fidget spinners or audio captioning which might not be what the people in your organisation require.
- † **Recognise that no two neurodivergent people are the same.** There's a saying that if you've met one autistic person, then you've met one autistic person, meaning that you can't generalise anything from that person to apply to other autistic people. And what might assist an autistic person at work might be the opposite to what is needed by someone with an acquired brain injury or with ADHD.
- † **Discuss potential accommodation clashes with kindness and compassion for all involved.** An accommodation for one neurodivergent person may cause issues for another. For example, a fidget tool that clicks or makes noise may interfere with the concentration or comprehension of someone with attention or auditory processing issues. When handled gently, a safer working environment can be created for all.
- † Adjustments for neurodiverse staff can take time, so it's **important to prepare documents, agendas and other materials in advance.** If a dyslexic person needs to run a long document through a text-to-speech reader or an autistic person needs time to adjust to a new proposal, last-minute additions are going to cause distress and disadvantage those staff over others who are able to rapidly read or digest the new material.
- † **Set up your office with a variety of spaces to cater for different work styles.** Open-plan offices and hot-desking might be terrific for people with ADHD but intimidating and anxiety-inducing for autistic people. Flexible working-from-home policies can also assist neurodivergent staff.
- † **Understand that neurodivergence is not the same as intellectual disability** and that while they can co-occur, neurodivergence exists across the entire intellectual range. Stereotypes at either end are unhelpful.
- † **Have an intersectional approach and recognise that neurodiversity exists in all communities.**

Interact with people as unique and complex individuals without reducing them to stereotypes.

AUTHOR BIO

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is a queer autistic Jewish person with ADHD. Xe is the managing director of *intertwine*, an organisation working to create a world where all people can thrive by dismantling the systemic power structures that create marginalisation and oppression.

See www.intertwine.net.au for more information.



INCLUSIVE WORKPLACE Toolkit²⁰²²



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