

# Create an Identity-Safe Organization

## *Six Strategies to Protect Others from Stereotype Threat*

### 1. Assess and Address Environmental Cues

Is there anything in the environment that subtly or overtly suggest that some groups belong and others do not? Is there anything that reinforces cultural stereotypes?

- Analyze the environment for stereotype-reinforcing images, documents, and art
- Remove stereotype-reinforcing images, documents, and art.
- Add counter-stereotypic imagery, art, media, etc.

### 2. Assess HR Policies and Procedures

Examine your job descriptions and performance standards.

- Write job descriptions and performance standards in a way that does not unintentionally evoke negative stereotypes about a group.

Examine your evaluation procedures for bias leakage and identity threat triggers.

- Develop evaluation procedures that specify measurable outcomes and specific behaviors.
- Reduce evaluation criteria that depend on the feelings of the evaluator(s). This may reassure employees that they are less likely to be judged on specific stereotypes.
- When possible, conduct evaluations so that evaluators have no access to information about employee group memberships (age, race or ethnicity, gender, etc.)

### 3. Train All Supervisors in Bias Prevention & Identity-Safe Feedback

Communicate.

- High standards for performance combined with an explicit belief that all employees can live up to those standards.
- Mistakes or failures are not due to the individual's fixed characteristics but are an essential part of growth and learning.

## 4. Monitor Meetings and Group Processes

Be mindful of group dynamics and take steps to ensure equitable inclusion of all. Some questions to ask:

- **Traction:** Whose ideas or opinions get no response or follow-up? Whose get attention?
- **Time:** Who has the floor and for how long?
- **Disruption:** Who is interrupted? Who interrupts?
- **Interest & Respect for Input:** Who gets asked questions? Whose opinion is sought out?

## 5. Implement Training for All Employees

Provide evidence-based training for all employees that teaches actionable and effective strategies to protect themselves & others from stereotype/identity threat.

## 6. Develop and Promote an All-Inclusive Multicultural Diversity Philosophy

Develop and disseminate a diversity philosophy that explicitly recognizes and values contributions from all groups, majority and minority.

- Identify concrete institutional or personal objectives that are realistically attainable within a specified timeframe.
- Be broadly inclusive and responsive in the formulation of the plan.
- Ensure all employees (minority and majority group members) report feeling included when they read/hear the philosophy.
- Help employees understand why the organization is moving away from a color-blind philosophy. Many have been taught that a color-blind philosophy is needed to promote group equality and may be initially confused by an all-inclusive multicultural philosophy.
- Identify ways of assessing progress from the current situation toward achieving the goal and assign responsibility for implementation and assessment to specific individuals, groups, or entities.
- Regularly monitor progress and consider whether a widely accessible metrics dashboard would be desirable for enhanced transparency.