

life Happens

HEADLINES

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Finding Strength in Our Differences: Embracing Diversity

Today's world is increasingly globalized, exposing you to more new ideas and ways of thinking than ever before. Thanks to technology, you can connect with people who have a variety of experiences, backgrounds, and values. Diversity is becoming more common, and while it ties into the way you look and present yourself, that's a small part of a broad concept. Think about all the characteristics that comprise your unique identity. It includes visible traits like race and gender, and non-physical traits including sexual orientation, gender identity, age, political beliefs, geographic location, socioeconomic status, religion, and much more. Some parts of your identity are fluid and change based on experiences that shape you and people who influence you, like your political beliefs, relationship status, and socioeconomic status. Other aspects are inherent parts of who you are, like race and sexual orientation. Broadly speaking, four dimensions encompass diversity:

Internal diversity refers to the traits you do not choose- you are born with them.

These include race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, assigned sex, and physical ability.

External diversity refers to circumstances and attributes you are not born with that shape your identity. They can be influenced by others and change over time.

Characteristics include socioeconomic status, relationship status, religion, education, and geographic location.

Organizational diversity refers to qualities that differentiate you as an employee or member of an organization. These are assigned characteristics and include job function, seniority, department, management level, pay type, and employment status.

Worldview diversity is fluid and can change over time and with experience. It is influenced by multiple factors, including internal, external, and organizational diversity characteristics. Worldview diversity consists of any lens from which you view and understand the world, like your beliefs, political affiliation, and morals.

The Difference Between Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

When you hear about diversity, it often goes



hand in hand with inclusion and equity. These terms get lumped together, but they are distinct concepts. While diversity recognizes our differences, inclusion welcomes a variety of inputs, respecting and valuing every person's unique contributions. Equity involves the fair treatment of individuals. It ensures equal access to resources and opportunities while recognizing and removing barriers that limit groups from reaching their full potential. A simple analogy is an easy way to remember how diversity, equity, and inclusion work together: Diversity asks, "who is in the room?", inclusion asks, "who has a seat at the table?", and equity asks, "who is trying to get into the room but can't? Whose presence in the room is under threat of erasure?"

Why Diversify?

Exposure to new ideas and ways of thinking enriches your life, promotes creativity and critical thinking, and encourages you to question why you do things the way you do. Conformity may be more comfortable- after all, it is easier to get along with those who share the same background, interests, and experiences as you- but comfortability is limiting.

Diversity Prevents Groupthink: Groupthink is more likely to occur when groups are homogenous or very similar. It is a phenomenon that occurs when individuals avoid dissenting with the larger group. Groupthink can happen because an individual identifies so strongly with the group that disagreeing or expressing doubt feels threatening or unnerving.

Diversity Encourages Open-Mindedness: You naturally gravitate towards people who are like you. But when you avoid interacting with people who are different, you restrict the information you receive. This impacts the attitudes and beliefs you form. It creates the tendency to be closed off, narrowing your worldview.

Diversity Promotes Creativity: Homogenous groups stifle creativity because similar individuals often share blind spots and a lack of awareness of these blind spots. If you only hear from people who share the same views, it's easy to assume everyone has the same perspective, hindering outside-the-box thinking. When people collaborate in diverse groups, they bring different information, opinions, skills, and insights. This leads to new approaches to problem-solving and greater creativity.

[Find out how diversity makes us smarter](#)

Diversity Makes a Difference

A 2015 study by McKinsey found companies with greater ethnic and racial diversity among staff performed **35%** better than companies whose staff demographics matched the national average. It also found companies with greater gender diversity performed **15%** better than companies with less gender diversity.



Sources: [McKinsey & Company](#)

Diversifying Your Life

Opening yourself to experiencing different ideas, information, and viewpoints enables you to think more creatively, gain a more balanced perspective, and think critically by questioning assumptions. Conformity may feel comfortable, but it's very limiting. Connecting with others who have different internal, external, organizational, and worldview characteristics gives inspiration and a richer life experience. A few ideas to consciously embrace diversity include:

- Reading books or articles from a broad range of authors
- Choosing inclusive media that incorporates more than one perspective
- Getting to know people outside your immediate circle through volunteer work
- Visiting a play, concert, or religious service outside your norm



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Emotion Well is EFR's monthly podcast. In our December episode we hear from Gabbie Ruggiero, a Prevention Specialist at EFR. Gabbie discusses the concept of harm reduction as it relates to drug use and abuse. Many outside the prevention and treatment



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communities are unfamiliar with this approach and Gabbie sheds light on how its intent is to reduce risk and negative consequences as it relates to drug use and abuse.

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Looking for further readings on a variety of health and wellness topics? Check out our monthly blog posts! The Hallmark movies portraying a picturesque scene of serene family get-togethers can leave you pining for a joyful reunion over the holidays. But real families are much messier than the perfectly scripted movies depict. As you head into the holiday season, try these strategies to manage difficult moments so you can better enjoy and appreciate the time spent together.



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