

ACT **ACTIVITY PACK**

Institution of
**MECHANICAL
ENGINEERS**



Improving the world through engineering

ACT ACTIVITY PACK

Introduction

In this pack you will find helpful tasks, suggestions, tips, and activities that you can do to increase your allyship, inclusive leadership skills, talent management and psychological safety for yourself and others at the IMechE.

The best way to work through this pack is to choose an activity that sparks your curiosity and to just give it a go, there is no right or wrong way to create inclusion and what may work for one person or team may not work for another.

Once you have completed an activity don't forget to talk about it to other people at the Institution and to share your learning so that other people have the opportunity to learn with you.

ACTIVITY ONE

Inclusive Leadership Behaviours

Leaders who are self-aware when it comes to their own abilities and behaviours tend to seek out different views to better inform their own decision making and inspire diversity. Inclusive leaders can say the following statements about themselves, and they can say them consistently.

Take some time working through the below list and score yourself against each of these core behaviours and skills (10 being you're an expert and 1 being that you need to develop this further):

- I am **EMOTIONALLY INTELLIGENT**, understand my own values and how they may differ from others.
- I have a **GROWTH MINDSET** which allows me to value differences by learning more about them and using information to increase my self-awareness and personal impact.
- I **ACTIVELY LISTEN** with **EMPATHY** when others are sharing their lived experience and listen to learn, not to respond. I do this with others who are not like me, as I do with those who are like me.
- I am **CURIOUS** to understand other people's lived experiences and choose to learn every day about myself and others to build stronger bonds.
- I am **AUTHENTICALLY** me when I come to work, understanding that this empowers others to do the same.
- I have high levels of **HUMILITY & VULNERABILITY**, understanding that I don't know everything and that it's ok for me to get things wrong. I also treat others with the kindness I expect when they make mistakes too.
- I take time to **REFLECT** on how my behaviour and the things I say could impact others and look at how to make these more inclusive.
- I have **COURAGE** to speak up when I believe something is not right and am willing to get it wrong by trying to get it right.

- I am ACCOUNTABLE for the way I behave/things I say and understand the impact I have on others, challenge the status quo, hold others accountable, and make diversity and inclusion a personal priority.
- I LEAD & INFLUENCE my team to be inclusive, showing them inclusive ways of working, embracing differences, creating psychological safety, and looking for new ways to create belonging.

Reflection

Once you have completed your scoring, have a look back through and pick the three that you would like to improve on the most, these will be the areas to focus your development on as you move into a more inclusive leadership mindset.

ACTIVITY TWO

Psychological Safety

This exercise will help you to create deeper psychological safety with your team and allow you to create an environment where people learn from mistakes and avoid 'blame culture'.

To create a psychologically safe environment we need to reframe failures and instead look at them as learning opportunities, only once they become an opportunity to learn do we destigmatise them and allow ourselves and each other to feel safe at work, leading to being more innovative and productive.

Try this simple exercise with your team:

- First, explain that to create psychological safety as a team, you must learn to discuss mistakes without fear of repercussion
- Then create a simple shared spreadsheet where everyone can add their own mistakes (anonymously if they choose)
 - Ask each team member to make a note of as many mistakes / things that didn't go to plan in the last year (it is important they are their own mistakes)
 - To help them, add two mistakes / things that **you personally** have 'gotten wrong' in the last year (e.g., accidentally sending an email to the wrong person or a deadline being missed on a project) - this will create a sense of safety where others will feel less vulnerable to add their own mistakes
 - Remind them that it is not important who made the mistakes, just that we capture them
- Then set up a meeting called '**Learning from 'Failure'**' and create a brainstorming session where you and the team all work together to reflect and think of what has been learnt from these mistakes.

Finally, ensure your team leave the session with the message that we can learn from everything that we do, the successes and the 'failures'. It is important to make mistakes and learn from them and to ensure we have a safe space within our team to be able to do this.

Encourage this type of openness through activities like this every few months to keep the conversation alive.

ACTIVITY THREE

Courageous Conversations

The purpose of Courageous Conversations is to create an environment for your people to feel heard, safe to be heard and generate a space where meaningful and productive conversations can be had by all involved.

Set the Scene

Explain the following to help your team understand what is and is not useful when having courageous conversations:

- This is a safe space, a place where we endeavour to listen and learn from each other
- We refrain from judgement, we listen with curiosity and an urge to understand each other better
- Do not discuss or reflect on positions, stances, opinions, or "sides" of the issues
- The conversation is not about taking positions or sides or debating
- Do not assume that individuals who share an identity share the same experiences or feelings

You May Not Be the Expert

And that's ok. You're not expected to be the person with all the answers, but you are the person who can facilitate courageous conversations between team members and explain that each time you and the team discuss DEI conversations will help others to understand this too. Also remind them that they may not have all the answers either and that it's ok just share and listen.

Create Curiosity

Creating compassionate curiosity will empower your people to take more time to do the same with others in the session. Each discussion is a chance to speak, be heard and also to hear other experiences, thoughts and feelings; so creating curiosity to want to

hear more and to want to understand others experiences can really open up a dialogue that may have never happened before.

Storytell

Storytelling doesn't mean creating a story, it means discussing something that you have observed, that has happened to you (or someone you know) or something that has had an impact on your life.

Using storytelling to create a safe space allows you to share your personal reflections/experiences about how you feel around the topic and create a sense of psychological safety for others to do the same. It allows those listening to feel a connection to you and make it more likely that they will feel comfortable being as vulnerable as you are in the discussion and are likely to share more with the group.

Use 'I' statements

Making it about your own experiences and speaking from your perspective rather than describing things that have happened in the organisation, means that you are paving the way for others to do the same. You're also allowing others in the group to show compassion and empathy towards you and enabling them to do the same with each other as the conversation progresses.

Suspend Judgement

As humans we give everything away in our body language, and our emotions can show up even in the slightest changes to our facial expressions, which can lead to others in the conversation to feel less comfortable to share for fear of judgement themselves. The easiest way to ensure this doesn't happen is to suspend your judgement of everything you hear in the sessions, that way you won't have to hide your emotive responses.

Activity & Reflection

Organise a team meeting where you can share with them the team the learning you have done throughout this programme and what your pledge as an inclusive leader is going to be (use your action plan from your 'Inclusive Leadership' workshop).

During this meeting use the tips above to create a psychologically safe space where people can open up and start to have more courageous conversations around DEI topics in general. The more we talk about these so called 'taboo' topics the better equipped we become as leaders at managing the relationships of those within our teams and ultimately increase productivity, creativity, psychological safety and encourage collaboration.

Don't forget to take some time to reflect immediately after your meeting including, how it went, what did you learn and what could you improve for the next courageous conversation?

ACTIVITY FOUR

Discussing DEI – Ways People Respond

Everyone will have a different feeling when it comes to discussing DEI at the Institution because everyone has different life experiences. Here are some of the ways that people could respond negatively when discussing this important topic with your team and your peers:

Defensiveness

People can become defensive when discussing DEI and you can spot this when people are:

- Dismissing information presented or other people's views/opinions
- Arguing about information or discussion
- Explaining or diminishing information or discussions

Detracting

When people are uncomfortable in a conversation they can detract, meaning that can talk about other areas they have suffered rather than e.g., talking about reverse racism, or discussing gender inequalities when you are discussing disability challenges.

Disengaging

This is a common action when people are discussing DEI, there could be several reasons people disengage:

- They don't believe there to be a problem with inequalities
- They don't know what to say or don't want to say the wrong thing
- They could feel shame or guilt
- They are so fed up and exhausted with talking about it and not seeing changes, they remove themselves completely from the conversation

What To Do

- With each of these it's important to remind them that we are all human, we don't always get it right, but if we strive to do the right thing, to listen, to learn, to understand and grow, we can't go wrong.
- If you make a mistake - own it. If you say something incorrectly - and you will - own it, apologise, say you will do better and research more around why you should or shouldn't have done or said what you did
- If you need to call attention to someone else's mistake, consider calling in instead of calling out - calling out is in the moment, in front of others, calling in is one on one, after the event. Explain why the impact of this comment or action was offensive despite the good intent.

Reflection

Take a moment to consider the last time you or someone you know responded in one of the above ways when discussing a topic within DEI:

- How did it make you feel?
- Why do you think you felt like this?
- What impact do you think it had on the other person?
- What would you do differently next time?

ACTIVITY FIVE

Unconscious Bias & Decision Making

Unconscious biases are the mental shortcuts our brains take to help us make quick decisions, because of these shortcuts sometimes our unconscious minds can act in a discriminatory way without meaning to.

Our biases are built from birth throughout our lives, through our lived experiences, through the things we see in media, from our families, local communities, schools, people we surround ourselves with and of course now, social media.

Unconscious bias can play a part in our decision making so subtly that until another person points it out, it can be difficult for us to notice it.

Our brains can process 11 million bits of information every second, but our conscious minds can only deal with 40-50 bits of information per second, and this leads to us unconsciously making short cuts.

Whilst it is difficult for us to challenge our unconscious mind, it is not impossible, and creating awareness of where our biases lie can really help us to remove the bias from our decision making.

Here are 3 simple things you can do to start challenging your own unconscious thinking:

1. **Accept that we all have unconscious bias** and discover your own by completing an Implicit Bias Test for free (see inclusion pack for module 1)
2. **Challenge your thinking** by taking a moment before you react to a situation, asking yourself "was this unconscious bias or an objective observation?"
3. **Widen your social circle** – a more diverse group of people in your life will help you to understand different views of the world and perspectives

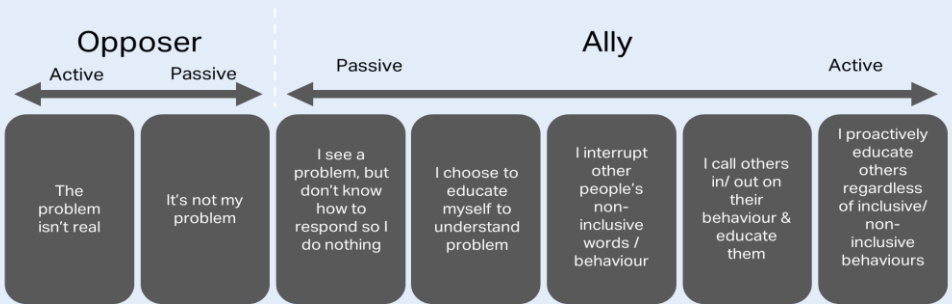
Try this in your next committee or meeting, then take a moment to reflect on:

- What worked?
- Were there any unconscious biases you could see within the group around the decision making?
- What was the reaction of those around you?
- What could you improve on next time to prevent unconscious bias from sneaking into decision making?

ACTIVITY SIX

Allyship Scale

As you know, every ally is on a journey, with most of us being somewhere around the early to middle mark on the allyship scale (below). The allyship scale helps us to understand not only where we are, but also, where others are. This helps us to identify what we need to do next to become a more active ally and how to influence others to do the same.



Following your workshop and a deeper understanding of what the above allyship journey looks like for yourself; ask your team to complete a similar activity in pairs and discuss where they believe they are at on the scale with the following groups of historically marginalised groups and why that is:

- Women
- Black people
- People with disability
- Those from the LGBT+ community

Don't forget to open up a discussion with the team following the activity so that you can all start to understand where you're all at with the allyship journey and work together to move up the scale.

IMPORTANT – do not complete this activity with your team until you are confident you can explain what an ally is and what they do effectively. If you missed your workshop or need a reminder, then rewatch the recorded version on the learning system so that you feel confident to have this courageous conversation.

ACTIVITY SEVEN

Inclusive Talent Management

Inclusive talent management is a key element to get right when creating diverse spaces where everyone feels they belong and are included. When we are looking to attract, hire, promote and support talented people throughout the Institution it is key to ensure fair and robust practices are in place to create talent pipelines.

Our policies and practices have a direct impact on the way we do all these things, so reviewing your internal ways of working will help you to see if there is any unintentional bias in any of your procedures.

Take some time to look through your recruitment process for your department, can you spot anything that could potentially prevent any of the following groups from applying for the role in the first place:

- Women or non-binary people
- Younger people
- Those who did not go to university
- People from minority ethnic backgrounds
- People not from the UK
- Those with neurodiversity

Consider what language is in the document, are there any areas you believe could be adapted to make it even more inclusive?

If the answer is yes, ensure you speak to the owner of the document and support the changes that need to be made (note there are most likely not too many and they should be small enough, but they make a big difference to the way people feel included).

ACTIVITY EIGHT

Your Pledge

Your pledge was the last part of your inclusive leadership session and you have now written down some key things that you will work on and should have now shared that with your team.

Accountability is an important aspect of being a truly inclusive leaders, so take some time to share that pledge with your peers, not just your team, take it to the next meeting and discuss your actions with people you collaborate with and ask them to hold you accountable.

1. Who did you speak to?
2. What was their response?
3. How can you ensure you complete the action you discussed?
4. Once you have completed that action, what can you do to further improve in that area of inclusivity?

FURTHER LEARNING

If you're a keen advocate for everything DEI and would like to explore these topics further, then here are some additional free online resources that will help you to delve deeper into this fascinating world and equip you with even greater skills to lead others inclusively at the Institution.

[Being an Ally Article](#)

['Can you ask...?' Video](#)

[Importance of Psychological Safety Online Course](#)

[Inclusive Talent Management Podcast](#)