

## Inclusive Practise Tip Sheet

Here are some helpful ground rules to help us all be as proactive and inclusive as possible in our professional and personal lives.

### Ground rules for learning:

- We are all teachers and learners
- What's said here stays here; what's learned here leaves here
- Be accountable for our actions & to each other
- Be unpolished but correct with care
- Take it with you if you can't take it in

**Use Inclusive Language:** Especially when meeting new people, try using gender non-specific language: *Partner*; *Significant other* and gender-neutral pronouns such as 'they/them/their' until we get to know the language someone uses. *Don't make assumptions about gender identity based on expression.* Take some time to learn what their identity words mean to them because language is personal! Also, avoid gendered language when addressing groups such as 'hey guys' as this is exclusive. Use terms like 'hey folks/class/people/lovely humans!'

**If you don't know what pronouns or gender-labels someone uses:** When in doubt, ask for name & pronouns: "*What pronouns do you use?*" or "*How do you like to be referred to?*" In informal situations you can just wait to use specific pronouns for anyone until either they give you one, rather than just asking those who you visibly read as non-binary or genderqueer. That can be very outing or potentially unsafe for trans folks, and totally misses genderqueer folk who you read as having a binary gender identity. Try using first names or 'they' until you know someone's pronouns.

**Respect everyone's self-identification:** Call everyone by their stated name(s) and pronoun(s). By doing this you are saying, "I see you, I affirm you, I respect you." If you make a mistake with names or pronouns, a) accept any corrections graciously, and b) take responsibility by simply acknowledging it, state the correct pronoun, and move on. Don't dwell on the mistake and make the person feel even more uncomfortable. We are ALL learning, and no one is an expert. It is also helpful to assume positive intent when we have to correct someone, remembering that humans make mistakes *and* have the ability to correct themselves in the future.

**Physical Space:** Visible representation and symbols of inclusivity are very important, especially when people are scanning a space, office, or website to see if they will be included there. Pay attention to where the gender-inclusive washroom options are and publicise them. What do your inclusive language policies look like? Are sexual orientation, gender identity, and gender expression included in your anti-discrimination policies? Are your events inclusive of folks of all genders and sexual orientations? Is the space physically accessible? Are collectively agreed upon safe space guidelines posted (e.g., inclusive language, consent, respect)?

**Misgendering:** Misgendering happens when someone is addressed with the wrong name or pronoun, and it is an extremely serious issue that must be handled with care. When someone is misgendered this can generate feelings of anxiety, frustration, anger, shame, dysphoria, and self-doubt. These feelings can increase if misgendering is a reoccurring issue. Never delegitimize someone's identity by saying, "I just don't see you as female" or "Those pronouns are too hard to learn." If misgendering occurs, we want to assume positive intent and remember that humans make mistakes – we need to support each other in our learning and always advocate for correct pronoun use and/or gender-inclusive language to *prevent misgendering from happening*.

**Questions from a place of Respect:** Respectful questions are how we learn, but remember that it's *not appropriate* to ask someone about their medical history, what their bodies look like, or their name / gender assigned at birth. Some people may be ok to talk about this information, but it is up to them. Give someone space to communicate their own comfort level by asking permission to ask questions, and respecting the answer either way; if someone offers to answer questions, respect any boundaries they set, pay close attention to their body language, and check in every so often to give space to stop anytime. Honour people's privacy and remember that not all people feel comfortable answering questions all of the time.

**Do Not 'Out' Anyone:** Making assumptions, speculating, or talking about people's identities behind their backs can be very damaging and disrespectful. If you hear someone talking/gossiping/spreading rumours (or disclosing information they shouldn't be) about someone else, correct them gently by telling them that what they are doing isn't ok. If the behaviour persists, tell your supervisor about the behaviour that compromises the safety of others. If someone shares personal information with you (comes out to you) consider this an honour, and keep the information confidential unless you have permission to share. Some people may be out at school or work but not out at home or in their communities. Everyone deserves the right to come out on their own terms!

**Be an Advocate:** Take instances of homophobia and transphobia seriously. Hold others accountable for language or actions that convey or promote anti-LGBTQ sentiments, even if it does not seem intentionally hateful (e.g. the use of the phrase "That's so gay"). Encourage others to be respectful in order to create an environment where everyone is welcome and accepted. Recognize that we are each on our own journey of learning; when encouragement to change does not suffice, utilize informal or formal avenues for addressing behaviours that threaten the emotional or physical safety of others.

**Educate Yourself:** Take some time to learn new information, ask questions, and explore the amazing and complex identities that make up the diverse human population on this planet. Read articles, use Google, watch documentaries, and attend workshops. Share what you have learned and engage in critical, thoughtful dialogue.