



The Power of Words: *Creating a Culture of Belonging*



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Three Takeaways

1. People first language
2. Situations are crazy (not people)
3. Work accessibility into everyday life



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Three Takeaways

1. Pronouns matter and can create safe spaces for everyone. Do your best to use gender-neutral language and also normalize asking other people their pronouns, sharing your pronouns, and including pronouns in introductions and on name tags (including on Zoom).
2. Use your voice & allyship to speak on trans equity, trans access, and ensuring spaces are safe for trans people. This includes speaking up if you see that someone is being misgendered.
3. Continue to further your learning and also share tools & resources for other folks to educate themselves on trans issues. Make sure your teams are trained and know some essentials around respect & language.



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Three Takeaways

1. Language evolves over time. Find the opportunity to learn, lead with respectful and genuine curiosity, and implement those lessons going forward.
2. Our language can be coded. Pause and ask yourself, ***what do you really mean when you say that?***
3. Avoid over-intellectualizing someone's experience.



Questions?



Scenario #1

Mariana, a long-term member of your team, has announced to the staff that they now go by the pronouns “they/them.” You notice that your colleague, Alex, misgenders Mariana (uses incorrect pronouns “she/her” to refer to them) multiple times after this announcement.

What would you do in this scenario?

What will you say to Alex?

What will you say to Mariana?

What, if any, follow-up will you do in this situation?



If you are witnessing the mistake:

- Politely correct the colleague and move on with the conversation:
“Hey Alex, Mariana uses they/them pronouns.”
- Continue to refer to Mariana using the correct pronouns.
- Follow up with your colleague to see if they need practice with pronouns.

If you are the one who makes the mistake:

- Don’t make it a big deal and don’t make it about yourself.
- An ideal response if someone corrects you:
“Oh, I’m sorry about that. Thank you for correcting me.”



Scenario #2

Background: The organization is a medium-sized nonprofit organization that provides voter outreach services to a predominately Latinx population. They are based in an affluent seaside community. Their board and senior leadership are white and a balanced mix of women who are both retired and working in a variety of professional fields.

Scenario: During a board meeting, a governance board member of color is guiding the group in developing a board matrix. They recognize that they need a variety of skills. A white board member says, “I know we need more diversity, but we need people with clear expertise in these areas.”

Guiding Questions: What’s at play here? How would you approach the situation?



If you are witnessing the mistake:

- Respond in the moment by saying that you'd like to do a quick check in on something that was just said. Share with everyone something along these lines:
“I know it was not intentional, but comments like that imply that people of color do not share the same level of expertise as white people. I think that's not aligned with our values as a board nor as an organization so let's try to move forward with focusing on our priority—diversifying our board.”
- Follow up with people of color on the board to check in on them and make sure they're okay.
- Follow up with the person who said it afterwards to see if they'd like more resources on why and how the comment stems from a white supremacy. And ask if they'd like to speak about it more with you.



If you are the one who makes the mistake:

- Don't make it a big deal and don't make it about yourself.
- An ideal response if someone corrects or calls you in:
“Thanking you for bringing this feedback to me. You are right. I’m sorry that I said that and I apologize for causing harm to any of you in that moment or making anyone feel uncomfortable today.”
- Follow up by researching and learning more about white supremacy and what it means to be anti-racist, especially in organizational cultures and environments.



THANK YOU!