

KEY TERMINOLOGY

TALKING ABOUT DEI CAN FEEL INTIMIDATING, BUT IT DOESN'T HAVE TO. YOU DON'T NEED TO GET IT PERFECT – THE KEY IS UNDERSTANDING THE TERMS AND FEELING CONFIDENT TO START THE CONVERSATION. THIS TABLE EXPLAINS THE KEY TERMS USED AROUND DEI, HELPING YOU UNDERSTAND AND APPLY THEM IN EVERYDAY SITUATIONS.

Term	Definition (& source)	In practice
Diversity	"Diversity refers to who is represented in the workforce. Some examples of diversity in workplaces include: gender, age, ethnic, physical ability and neurodiversity. These are a few of the most common examples, but what is considered diverse can range widely." (McKinsey)	Who is in the room – i.e. a range of different experiences, backgrounds and identities.
Inclusion	"Inclusion refers to how the workforce experiences the workplace and the degree to which organisations embrace all employees and enable them to make meaningful contributions." (McKinsey)	Inclusion means creating a culture where everyone feels they belong and can bring their whole self to work. For example, making sure all team members are heard in shift meetings and invited to contribute to decisions. "Diversity is being invited to the party; inclusion is being asked to dance." Vernā Myers
Equity	"Fair treatment and equality of access to opportunity, information and resources, built through identification and elimination of unfair biases, stereotypes or barriers that may inadvertently exclude underrepresented employees." (Gartner)	Equity acknowledges that everyone has different needs, experiences, and opportunities, and means making sure everyone has what they need to succeed. For example, giving a team member with children flexible start times so they can balance work and childcare.
Unconscious bias	"Social stereotypes or preferences that affect our understanding, decisions, and actions without conscious awareness." (Harvard Business Review)	Our brains take shortcuts to process information quickly, but these rely on assumptions, stereotypes, or past experiences and can influence our decisions without us realising it. For example, thinking someone is better suited for a role because of their age.
Microaggressions	"Microaggressions are defined as the everyday, subtle, intentional – and oftentimes unintentional – interactions or behaviours that communicate some sort of bias toward historically marginalised groups." (Dr Kevin Nadal)	Subtle comments or reactions that send subliminal biased messages or negative assumptions about a person's identity. For example, asking an ethnic minority colleague, "Where are you really from?" can imply they don't truly belong, even if they were born locally.
Psychological safety	"Psychological safety means feeling safe to take interpersonal risks, to speak up, to disagree openly, to surface concerns without fear of negative repercussions or pressure to sugarcoat bad news." (McKinsey)	Feeling safe to be yourself, speak up, ask questions, make mistakes, and offer new ideas without fear of punishment or humiliation. For example, a team member can raise a concern without fear of repercussions.
Allyship	"Allyship transcends mere passive support; it entails taking tangible actions to challenge and dismantle systemic inequalities." (Oxford Review)	Taking action to support a group you don't belong to. Educating yourself about different experiences and challenges, listening to people's perspectives without judging, speaking up to challenge bias or unfair treatment, amplifying voices so they are heard, and taking concrete steps to support equity.

STARTING CONVERSATIONS

THE REAL IMPACT COMES FROM HAVING COURAGEOUS CONVERSATIONS. WHETHER IT'S ADDRESSING A CONCERN, SHARING FEEDBACK, OR SIMPLY BUILDING CONNECTION, HOW WE TALK ABOUT DEI SHAPES WORKPLACE CULTURE EVERY DAY AND HELPS US BECOME BETTER ALLIES. THESE CONVERSATIONS DON'T HAVE TO BE PERFECT – THEY JUST NEED TO BE INTENTIONAL. HERE ARE FIVE PRINCIPLES TO HELP YOU START WITH CLARITY AND CONFIDENCE.

ACKNOWLEDGE THE FEAR

- 1 It's okay to feel nervous. Saying it out loud can help both of you relax. For example: *"This might feel a bit uncomfortable, but I'm coming from a place of wanting to understand and work better together."*

LEAD WITH CURIOSITY AND HUMILITY

- 2 Ask questions and show you're open to learning. For example: *"Can you help me understand your perspective on this?"* or *"I'm trying to learn more about how this feels for you."*

FOCUS ON 'I' STATEMENTS

- 3 Instead of saying, *"You always do X"* or *"You should Y,"* share your own perspective: *"I noticed X, and I felt Y"* or *"My experience is Z."* This keeps the conversation about your experience and helps avoid putting the other person on the defensive.

CHOOSE YOUR MOMENTS WISELY

- 4 Not every moment is the right moment for every conversation. Think about privacy, timing, and how both of you are feeling. A calm, private chat usually works better than a quick comment in public.

BE PREPARED TO LISTEN AND LEARN

- 5 These conversations are a two-way street. The goal isn't just to share your perspective, but to truly understand the other person's experience. Be open to learning something new about them, their experiences, or even your own blind spots. Don't expect to be taught everything – do your own learning too.

