

# Modern Belonging

Your guide to implementing integrative, evidence-based strategies that promote employee well-being, inclusion, and belonging within your organization.



# What is “Modern Belonging”?

Modern Belonging is the belief that helping employees feel like they *belong* is crucial for employee well-being, productivity, and retention in the modern workplace.

Belonging is not only a psychological need, but a connection that empowers employees of diverse backgrounds to show up authentically in the workplace, resulting in greater engagement, creativity, and productivity. Employees need to feel like they belong to thrive at work, and there are ways you can help them show up as their best selves day after day.

This guide equips you with evidence-based strategies to build a thoughtful Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Belonging (DEIB) strategy that prioritizes belonging and employee well-being within the workplace.

## We'll cover:

- Why the “B” in DEIB matters: The relationship between mental health and DEIB
- How to build belonging into your organizational culture and DEIB strategy
- Modern Health resources for you and your employees





# DEIB Terms to Know

## Culture

Beliefs and values that influence how we think, speak, behave, and interact. We experience different cultures based on our identities at the individual, team, organization, and societal levels. These shape how we interpret and experience others.

## Intersectionality

A [critical lens](#) used to examine interlocking forms of power and oppression, and to acknowledge the ways in which oppressive structures (e.g. racism and patriarchy) work together to sustain one another.

## Social Identity

A person's affiliation with and feelings of connection to other members of a sociocultural group (such as age, disability, religion, gender, ethnicity, race, gender expression, socioeconomic status, and tribe). People have multiple social identities, which can overlap. Which social identity is most important to us can change depending on the environment. For example, at church religious identity may be most important, but at work, age may play a larger role in how a person identifies.

## Diversity

Representation or composition of social identity groups, including race or ethnicity, gender identity, sexual orientation, geography, age, language, disability, mental well-being status, socioeconomic status, religion, and other dimensions.

## Equality

Each individual or group of people is given the same resources or opportunities and requires the lack of unjustifiable discrimination based on a person's identity, including gender, age, sexual orientation, origin, caste or class, income or property, language, religion, convictions, opinions, health, or disability.

## Equity

A sense of fairness and justice, that [acknowledges the impartial distribution of resources according to need](#) and seeks to ensure that these needs are met.

## Inclusion

Cultivating an environment of belonging by acknowledging, welcoming, and accepting different approaches, styles, perspectives, and experiences.

## Psychological Safety

An environment in which employees trust that team members will not judge them negatively for offering an opinion, proposing an idea, or expressing their individuality.

## Belonging

Feeling psychologically safe, accepted, and [welcomed](#) for all aspects of your identity in a group setting. In the context of the workplace, belonging can also relate to "feeling seen for your unique contributions, connected to your coworkers, supported in your daily work and career development, and proud of your organization's values and purpose." ([Kennedy, 2021](#))

## Cultural Humility

A core component of multicultural orientation which involves [inward self-awareness, outward valuing of others, and upward growth](#) as a means to appreciate and respect differing cultural experiences.

## Culturally Centered Care

The integration of culture into mental health care delivery, [guided by 4 key concepts](#): 1) Awareness of culture 2) Knowledge of cultural aspects of an individual, group, couple, family, community, or organizational experience 3) Understanding of the difference between culture and pathology and 4) Ability to integrate these concepts into service delivery.





# Mental Health is a Must for DEIB

If you're not focusing on mental health, you're probably not fully supporting your DEIB goals.

## Belonging links DEIB and Mental Health

2020 shined a spotlight on some of the ways that DEIB and mental health are interdependent. After George Floyd's murder, for example, [anxiety and depression symptoms more than tripled in Black & Latinx communities](#). This catalyzed many employers to take actions to support mental health and DEIB separately, but how do organizations address these issues together in a meaningful way?

The first step is recognizing that you cannot meaningfully prioritize DEIB initiatives without prioritizing access to mental health care. And you cannot fully support mental health without considering the impact of culture and social identity on people's day-to-day lives. What links DEIB and mental health together is belonging.

The success of DEIB initiatives are measured by the ability to retain diverse talent. To achieve this, you must create an environment where employees feel that they belong. And the feeling of belonging stems from having a psychologically safe environment that prioritizes mental well-being.



## Belonging in the Workplace

Belonging means feeling safe, accepted, and welcome in a group. In the workplace, **it also has to do with** feeling recognized for unique contributions, harmony with coworkers, supported in all respects, and proud of the organization's values and purpose.

Employees with a sense of belonging **are more likely** to be engaged in their work, feel loyal to their organization, and intend to stay at their job.

At its core, belonging cannot exist without psychological safety, or feeling confident that questions, ideas, and self expression won't be judged negatively by the group.

In a **survey** of 1,000 global employees, 90% said psychological safety is important for:

- productivity and retention
- preventing mistakes
- creativity at work.

But the survey also found that companies, while recognizing the importance of psychological safety, don't do enough about it; only 10% prioritized psychological safety within the workplace.

Ultimately, employers should **cultivate a psychologically safe work environment** as a necessary prerequisite for any DEIB efforts.



# Building Belonging into your DEIB Strategy

Here's how you can incorporate evidence-based strategies for well-being, inclusion, and belonging into your DEIB strategy.

## Move from Tolerant and Inclusive to *Integrative*

As you develop your organizational strategy around DEIB, take inventory of your organization's language, norms, values, environment, and even products and services. Then assess whether your organization's practices in each category are tolerant, inclusive, or integrative.

### Tolerant

Acknowledges differences between individuals, but does not embrace or accept other cultural groups and their norms.

#### What this may look like

- Recognition that not all employees celebrate the same holiday, but not offering a floating holiday or a paid holiday for non majority holidays.
- Acknowledgment that employees may have differing views, values and beliefs without respecting these differences.
- Perceived devaluation of cultural practices and beliefs that are dissimilar to your own.

### Inclusive

Behaviors, language, and attitudes that are considerate of other cultural groups and their group norms.

#### What this may look like

- Diverse representation among employees and customers.
- Racially/ethnically diverse representation throughout products, services, and marketing.
- ERGs exist to provide safe spaces for communities to engage.
- Marginalized voices are welcomed to contribute.

### Integrative

An extension of inclusivity: Consideration of your culture and others' in every encounter.

#### What this may look like

- Thinking about diversity in the planning process of any team initiatives.
- Representation throughout products, services, and marketing extends beyond race, proactively considering other dimensions including age, ability status, religion, and other dimensions.
- Vetting your vendors for commitment to DEIB.
- Marginalized communities themselves do not bear the weight of ERG creation and administration. Executive sponsors and allies are core partners in these efforts.



# Prioritize Safe Spaces for Diverse Communities with ERGs

Employee Resource Groups (ERGs) can be a great starting point for employees to find a sense of belonging and community. ERGs provide safe spaces for employees to connect with others who can relate to their culture or identity, allowing them to reflect on their shared experiences, grow personally and professionally, and engage with similar ERGs in other organizations.

For organizations that already have established ERGs, here are questions to reflect on:

- Do your ERGs have engaged executive sponsors?
- Are your ERGs' efforts discussed and shared with the broader organization?
- Is the workload within ERGs distributed among allies as well?
- Do employee performance reviews take into account individuals' contributions to ERGs and DEIB?
- Are ERG leads involved in your new hire onboarding process to ensure that practices are inclusive and integrative?
- Do your ERGs have a resource to support allyship engagement and training?



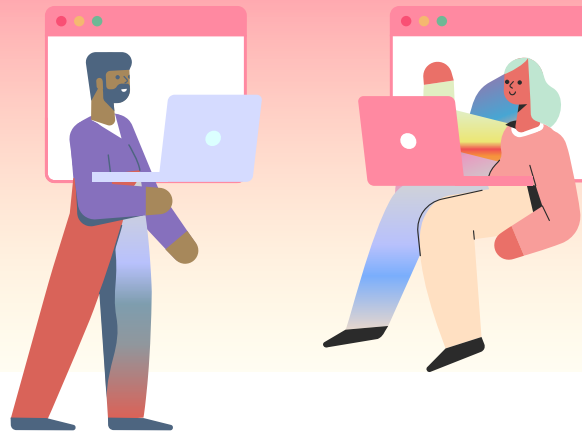
# Resources Available to You and Your Employees Today

Given the inextricable link between DEIB and well-being, access to culturally-centered mental health resources are essential to your DEIB strategy. Modern Health incorporates [cultural humility training and culturally centered care](#) into our provider network and care offerings.

## Community Circles

We invite you to share these [Modern Health Circles series](#) with your organization as a resource to help employees of all identities and backgrounds, including allies, find community and belonging around mental health.





### BIPOC Mental Health Month

To raise awareness and support, Modern Health [launched a new Circles series in July called BIPOC Mental Health Month](#) that explores the BIPOC mental health experience. Our expert providers are leading discussions on how to find culturally-centered care, and facilitating discussions on mental health stigma and on intersectionality within the BIPOC community.

#### The BIPOC Mental Health series includes sessions on:



Living Outside Your Home Country



When Being Resilient Isn't Enough



Destigmatizing Mental Health Among BIPOC Men



How to Pick a Provider



Being Queer in the BIPOC Community



Dismantling Mental Health Stigma



Caring for Yourself While Caring for Others

### Black Lives Matter

[Designed to offer intimate spaces for Black communities](#) to share their stories, and educational spaces for allies to listen and learn.

### Healing Asian Communities

Designed to address anti-Asian racism that has grown since the start of the Covid pandemic [through intimate spaces for Asian communities](#) to share their stories, and educational spaces for allies to listen and learn.

### Healing Latinx/Hispanic Communities

[Designed to offer intimate spaces for Hispanic communities](#) to share their stories, support, and connect with other Hispanic identifying individuals.

We also continue to offer our [foundational Circles](#) on topics like Emotional Resilience, Sleep, and Stress & Burnout.

