

# Cultural Competency & Psychological Safety

## Key Takeaways

### What is Culture?

- Customs, social norms, and material traits of a nation, people or social group
- Culture in the workplace shows up as shared attitudes, goals, and behaviours that shape people's experience
- Culture influences whether people feel like they belong

### What is Cultural Competence?

The ability to understand, appreciate, and interact effectively across cultures.

### Why Does This Matter for OACETT Members?

- Diverse teams: newcomers, multi-faith workplaces, gender diversity in the field of engineering
- Different communication norms, lived experiences, and expectations of workplace culture
- Cultural competency is a professional skill - not a 'soft' behaviour or afterthought

### Unconscious Bias

Refers to the **associations, preferences, and prejudices** we hold outside of our **conscious awareness**.

- Affects everyone. It is not a character flaw, it is a brain phenomenon
- Triggered automatically
- The first step: being aware of it and acknowledging it so you can begin to modify your behaviour

### Inclusive Language

Language that acknowledges diversity, conveys respect to all people, is sensitive to differences, and promotes equal opportunities.

Language that is free from words, phrases, and tone that reflect discriminatory or stereotyped views of people or groups.

### Why Does Inclusive Language Matter?



76% of people support employers that reflect their identity and values.



Inclusive communication increases engagement, retention, and loyalty.



Inclusive organizations are 3 times more likely to have high-performing teams.



Exclusionary language can damage reputation and morale.

### Practical Strategies for Inclusive Communication & Decision-Making

- Set team norms
- Balance voices
- Offer multiple formats for communication
- Explain decision-making processes clearly
- Share how input will be used
- Acknowledge contributions

### What is Psychological Safety?

**Psychological safety** is the belief that one can speak up, express concerns, and make mistakes without fear of punishment or humiliation.

It is foundational in creating inclusive workplaces.

### Being an Inclusion Champion

- **In technical work:** equitable task assignment, PPE advocacy, safety culture
- **In meetings:** structured participation, amplifying quieter voices, avoid interrupting
- **On the Job:** mentorship, calling in/out bias, modelling inclusive norms

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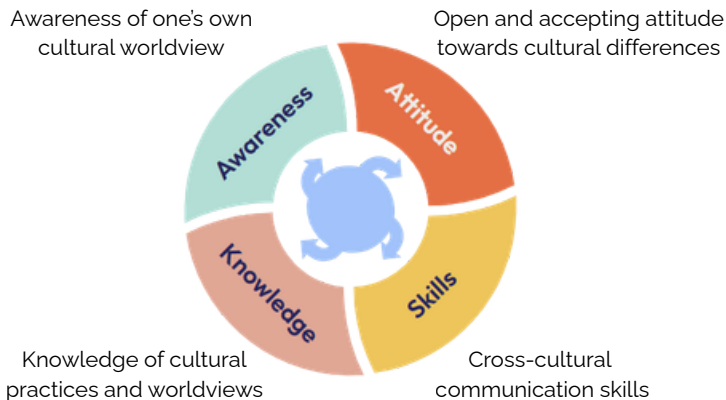
## Key Takeaways

### Allyship in Action:

#### Calling In vs. Calling Out

- **Calling out:** naming harmful behaviour in the moment, with care and courage. Publicly when necessary.
  - Ex: "Hey (name), I noticed you didn't get to finish your point. What were you going to say?"
- **Calling in:** addressing behaviour privately, with curiosity. Often more effective in relationship-based environments.
  - Ex: "I don't think that landed the way you meant it, can we talk about that?"

### Components of Cultural Competence



### Awareness

- What is your background?
- Recognize our own biases
- Acknowledge stereotypes exist
- Recognize differences and similarities between cultures

### Attitude

- Practice **empathy**
- Cultivate your **curiosity**
- Rekindle your sense of fun and play
- What is your curiosity profile?

### Knowledge

- Do some research
- Cultural events
- Avoid tokenizing individuals
- Be open to other people's accommodations.

### Skills

Communication barriers and cultural biases

### Non-violent communication

- **Observations**
- **Feelings**
- **Transparency**

### Communication is Multifaceted

- **Verbal:** Tone of voice, choice of words.
- **Non-Verbal:** Body language, facial expressions.
- **Cultural:** Social norms, etiquette.

### Key Points:

- Cultural competency is a practice, not a destination. It requires **ongoing curiosity, humility, and action.**
- Inclusion can't happen without **cultural competency.**
- Inclusion in technical environments needs to be named **and practiced intentionally.**
- Every OACETT member, regardless of role or seniority, **has the ability and responsibility** to be a champion of inclusion

### Learn More:

- [Greetings Around the World | Cut by Cut](#)
- [Decoding Emotions](#) | Hidden Brain Media
- [Brené Brown on Empathy](#) by RSA
- [Assessment: What's Your Curiosity Profile?](#) (Harvard Business Review)
- ["The Culture Map" by Erin Meyer](#)
- ["Culturally Responsive Teaching and The Brain" by Zaretta Hammond](#)
- ["Blindspot: Hidden Biases of Good People" by Mahzarin R. Banaji and Anthony G. Greenwald](#)
- [The Mind of the Village](#)
- [National Center for Cultural Competence \(NCCC\)](#)
- [Code Switch](#) by NPR