

Cultural Competency & Psychological Safety Training Webinar

Q&A Summary - April 28, 2026

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#	Question & Answer:
Q1:	Is there a line for cultural acceptance in healthcare? Person A says shaving their beard is against their religion. During a pandemic this person would not enter rooms as they cannot wear the correct PPE.
A1:	This is a good question, and a challenging one to answer. Note that my response is merely my consideration of the topic, rather than an objective truth or something to be taken as fact. I believe there is a difference between expecting Cultural Competency in the workplace and expecting conformity to workplace policies, even for safety protocols such as wearing specific PPE, when doing so contravenes a protected class (in this case, Religion) and the Canadian Human Rights Act (1977) mandates accommodations. What those accommodations look like is up to the Hospital leadership, Human Resources, and/or the Manager/Supervisor, but they should be made on behalf of an individual for whom shaving their beard goes against their religious beliefs. This could be a change in work environment (perhaps in the office, versus patient rooms); a change in PPE to accommodate a beard; or some other manner in which to support the employee. Outside of protected class accommodations, Cultural Competency in the workplace is more about recognition of unconscious bias, celebration of difference, and supporting underrepresented or marginalized community members for whom workplaces may have been psychologically unsafe resulting from a lack of cultural competency (either by management, peers, or both).
Q2:	Do major organizations hold workshops on this subject, especially during the hiring process? I think this would go a long way in creating a better culturally competent workplace.
A2:	I agree! Implementing cultural competency training directly into hiring processes is an exceptional way to educate and inform others of workplace cultures and expectations surrounding solidarity, versus stigmatization. In my experience, some Corporate organizations have begun including pre-recorded videos in a training database hosted online (such as a Google Drive, or Company Intranet) as part of the onboarding processes for new hires. These videos often range in duration from 20-60 minutes, and aim to provide consistency in delivery of training for all new employees. Depending on the employee's preferred method of learning, this may or may not be an effective approach, and some employees in my personal experience have viewed these pre-recordings as "performative," rather than intentional and impactful, as the disembodied voices on the training are not relatable to the new employee, nor do they explicitly mention or reference the specific workplace/environment at their office; they are generic, and designed to be widely applicable to many organizations, rather than catered to that

	specific employer. Having said this, I believe it is better to have some training on Cultural Competency, as opposed to none at all.
Q3:	If you join a team who has been psychologically “gas lit” to normalize toxic behaviour from leadership, and you believe HR is also under the influence, how do you become a change agent without sacrificing your job?
A3:	This is tricky, particularly if HR is suspected of being “under the influence” of the toxic leadership, or party to the behaviour and conduct that makes a workplace feel psychologically unsafe. Sadly, I can personally relate to this experience, and so I empathize with any employee who feels they cannot approach leadership to address a workplace culture concern, and fear reprisal from HR impacting job security. The hard truth? Sometimes, this cannot be changed. Gaslighting is a powerful, negative behaviour and it can poison a workplace beyond repair without a total overhaul and replacement of the team. This is not always realistic. One approach may be to consider external support resources or training for the team to subtly address the toxic behaviours. Another may be to call it out directly and try to “table” all issues with transparency and faith that being direct could return positive, meaningful change. Without trying to sound cynical, this can also be equally damaging, so is not always the best or most recommended approach. Finally, if worse comes to worst, sometimes the only solution is to choose your personal values and beliefs over the workplace. Remember, you are a ‘human’ before you are an ‘employee.’ The best investment you can make is in yourself, and sometimes walking away is the most logical decision to avoid the kind of negative experience that comes with a toxic workplace. Just try not to burn any bridges on your way out, if you choose to leave.
Q4:	You spoke about being a white cis male, and it is having a related unearned advantage. Is it then to be assumed by others (i.e. newcomers) that this is your culture, and such it should be respected in the same way? This seems wrong.
A4:	I apologize if I misspoke, or if by sharing my personal identity, I confused anyone. No, I do not believe my own identity as a White, Cisgendered, Able-Bodied, Male is reflective of my “culture,” nor that it should afford me more respect than anyone else. These “identities” are unearned positions of power and privilege, which means they afford me certain advantages in society that I did not earn (such as a job title, or role); rather, they are things about myself that I cannot change and they are—at least in Western culture—the most ‘typical’ or common identities for people historically known to sit in positions of influence or power. In fact, I actually believe these identities obligate me to use my positions of power—my influence, or my ‘platform’—to help raise awareness, educate, and restore equity to society in order to benefit those underprivileged or marginalized voices who may otherwise have been lost or disregarded by some people who live (willfully or innocently) in ignorance as to why equity education and cultural competence are such important skills to learn. This is one of many reasons I choose to and enjoy teaching diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging courses for organizations seeking to improve their workplace conditions through these sessions. Perhaps, to the right listener, my voice will carry further as a result of my identity (which many can relate to), than if the lesson were delivered by someone who does not look or sound like me.
Q5:	With being neurodivergent I have been passed over because everyone else was neurotypical. The PM targeted me for all wrong doing. How do you deal with this?
A5:	I’m very sorry to hear this. I believe neurodivergence is a lived identity that has only

recently become more recognized as ‘legitimate’ for different learning and leading styles. Too often, organizations can default to what looks and feels comfortable, as opposed to what (or in your case, whom) is the actual best choice for something — such as advancement, or special projects. Sometimes, the best approach is a candid conversation about your experience, your abilities, your desire to grow and advance within the organization, and to ask plainly why you’ve been passed over when previous opportunities have been presented. Be open and receptive to feedback, and take 24 hours to process the answer; don’t react emotionally... respond intentionally. When you’ve had time to digest the feedback, consider if there is anything legitimate to your leader’s words. If there isn’t actionable, constructive feedback that could be applied and measured for improvement, this may be a case of discrimination—intentional, or unintentional. It’s important to then share these concerns with Human Resources, or your People & Culture team. If you are concerned about reception or reprisal, there may be an anonymous ‘Whistleblower’-type feedback box that goes to Senior Leadership, who should be willing to step in and address the subject more broadly for the benefit of the entire organization. What matters most is that you know your neurodivergence does not make you “less than” any other employee, and you are capable of achieving all you aspire to with the right support.

Q6: I like the team tips on getting people to be open and no wrong answers. The hospital comment with one team reporting more mistakes because they had more engagement was very interesting and ties directly to work teams. I would like to lean more tips for employee engagement and inclusion. Also how do we track this progress in a work team and quantify results. Are you ever done learning people skills?

A6: The easy answer to your question is “No!” — We are never ‘done’ learning people skills. The most wonderful and challenging realization I’ve come to after years in senior leadership & people management positions is that employees are constantly changing. A top performer may become a parent, and their life and work priorities change. An engaged employee may become disenfranchised because of a new, poor Manager. The right Training can re-engage even the most disinterested or “checked out” employees, if delivered by the right facilitator. This means we need to constantly be evolving our workplace culture to fit the ‘new’ identities of our workforce and, therefore, our policies to fit accordingly. For example, many industries went fully remote during the COVID-19 pandemic; now, with Return to Office (RTO) policies being implemented in both public and private sectors, professionals are speaking out more than ever about the harm this has done to their work/life balance. They lose sleep due to commutes, they lose family-time due to long office hours, they eat poorer because of ‘office pizza parties’ that are touted as ‘Perks’ offered by Employers, over actual meaningful benefits. As Leaders, when we don’t listen to our teams, we risk disengagement and ostracizing our best workers. It stands to reason then, that we must constantly be learning people skills in order to grow with our people and as an organization. To achieve this, employees need to engage with each other meaningfully; it can’t just be Happy Hours on Friday nights. Measuring employee engagement in a quantifiable way is not as easy as some make it out to be; it requires a qualifiable approach, despite that sounding counterintuitive. Instruments for measurement include Engagement & Employee Satisfaction Surveys, Attendance at optional/voluntary company events such as Quarterly Socials, and performance output and productivity. Engaged employees are employees who feel

heard, understood, and valued; they are happy. Unhappy employees are disengaged, unproductive, and miserable to work with; and that costs company big dollars in production, turnover, and reputation. For just a few examples of including and engaging employees, I encourage organizations to celebrate team member birthdays, give Flex Time to parents to support their kids, offer Mental Health PTO days, host cultural celebrations/seasons, invest in training and professional development, and solicit anonymous feedback from employees consistently throughout the year via Survey. This is how you receive valuable, measurable data that quantifies the engagement of employees (through qualifiable interaction). For more information on these topics, explore CultureAlly's large catalogue of available Trainings, or explore a custom session for your specific team!