



## **THE ART OF INCLUSIVE COMMUNICATION**

# **COMPANION LEARNING GUIDE**



**NATIONAL  
CONFLICT  
RESOLUTION  
CENTER™**

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## **CULTURE, COMMUNICATION, AND CONFLICT:**

**A Certificate Program  
for Leaders Navigating  
Today's Workplace**



## **BURST VIDEO:**

### **Understanding Your Power and Utilizing Humble Inquiry as a Leader**

**Written by Dr. Toni Herndon and Lisa Maxwell**

**REFLECT:** *What stood out for you in the video?*

**JOURNAL:** *Consider all the sources of social power that you have. How do you use your power to empower?*

**DIALOGUE WITH A TRUSTED COLLEAGUE:** *How do we tap into our referent power more successfully? What questions demonstrate an open attitude and curiosity?*

# The ART of Inclusive Communication



We will do all we can to create a [psychologically safe space](#) for you so that you can comfortably share your experiences and perspective.

We also ask that you consider the work of Dr. Carol Dweck of Stanford University in taking the approach of a [growth mindset](#) as you participate in the sessions. While each of you is an expert, there is always more to learn!

There will be a series of four sessions:

- 1. The ARTful Conversation:** You'll learn how to effectively handle challenging one-on-one conversations. This foundational course lays the groundwork for all subsequent sessions.
- 2. The ART of Inclusive Communication:** You'll explore strategies and techniques to embrace and promote inclusivity.
- 3. The Bystander Challenge:** You'll learn how to empower others at your workplace to become thoughtful upstanders as part of creating a sense of belonging in the workplace.
- 4. The Exchange:** You'll learn a conflict resolution process that helps you lead a problem-solving conversation, focused on collaboration and future success.

# Learning Outcomes



**NCRC** THE ART OF INCLUSIVE COMMUNICATION

**Learning Outcomes**

In this workshop, we will reinforce a **mindset of inclusiveness**:

- Reflect on our **own biases** and our **communication style**.
- Consider how **political biases** impact **workplace teams**.
- **Effectively communicate** with employees along the entire spectrum of political beliefs — and help **employees communicate with one another**.

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## FURTHER LEARNING

Inclusive language is key to successful communication in a diverse work environment. To educate oneself further in this regard, the [Inclusive Language Guide](#) is especially helpful.

The **ART of Inclusive Communication** introduces the essential elements of culture and style into how we communicate. Not only will we look at a few ways our identities, including our political identities, impact communication, but we also will consider how to interact effectively with others who have different beliefs than us around controversial, divisive topics.

The ART skills are relevant in creating a human-centered approach to managing all conversations, but especially sensitive conversations around identity, culture, politics, and race.

The article [“The older model of leadership just doesn’t cut it anymore”](#) provides evidence that human-centered leadership is needed. Engaging and motivating employees becomes more important to business success. That includes making sure workers feel like they’re being listened to, supported, and inspired to feel like “psychological owners” of their work. [This article](#) by NCRC President Steve Dinkin supports creating a trusting relationship with employees.



## REFLECT

How do you *harness the diversity, the energy, and the creativity* of employees to creatively solve problems?

The quote by Roger Wilkins is more than a feel-good notion; it is a profound statement that addresses the importance of an inclusive atmosphere. Multiple studies indicate that diverse teams (in every measure of diversity, including gender and cognitive diversity) are better at problem solving. These diverse groups are more creative and effective than in monocultural environments.

### Additional Sources for Diversity at Work

- [28 Reasons Why Diversity At Work Matters](#)
- [Diverse Teams Feel Less Comfortable – and That is Why They Perform Better](#)
- [Ten Stats That Demonstrate Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion are Good for Business](#)

# Breakout Discussion

## HUMBLE INQUIRY

“Humble inquiry is the fine art of drawing someone out, of asking questions to which you do not already know the answer, of building a relationship based on curiosity and interest in the other person.”

- Edgar Schein



## Humble Inquiry: Types of Questions

- May I ask you for an example to help me understand?
- Just for my understanding, could you tell me more about \_\_\_\_\_?
- Can you share with me any worries you may have about risks or concerns related to \_\_\_\_\_?
- Could you please talk me through the pros and cons of your next steps?

### BREAKOUT

- What stood out for you about a leader's sources of power?
- How does humble inquiry relate to being an inclusive leader of employees who have diverse perspectives on hot-topic issues?



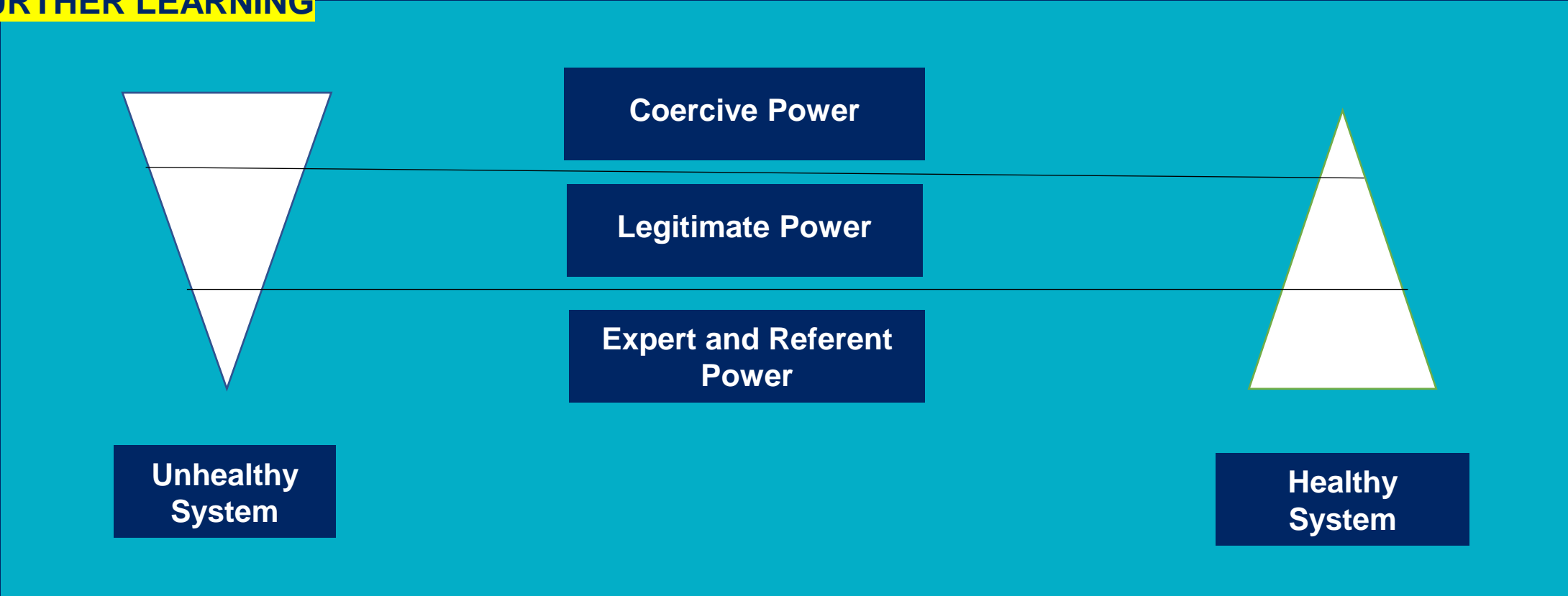
## FURTHER LEARNING

Highlights of Edgar Schein's Book on Humble Inquiry

It has been found that workplace leaders who demonstrate cultural humility are more inclusive leaders. Utilizing humble inquiry is one step to being an inclusive leader.

# Power Dynamics in the Workplace

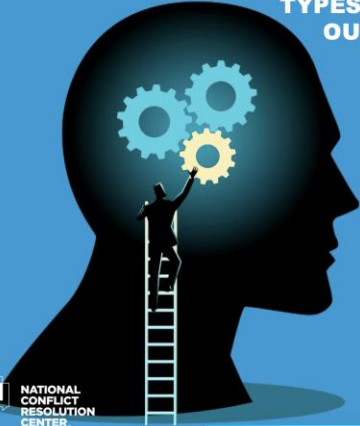
## FURTHER LEARNING



In the burst video, we refer to a leader's sources of power. [Learn more about the types of social power here.](#)

### Types of Social Power Leaders Have





**TYPES OF COGNITIVE BIASES THAT BLOCK OUR ABILITY TO LEAD INCLUSIVELY**

**In-Group Bias**  
is the tendency to favor one's own group, particularly in reference to other groups (Dictionary of Psychology).

**Confirmation Bias**  
is the tendency to look for information that supports, rather than rejects, one's preconceptions, typically by interpreting evidence to confirm existing beliefs while rejecting or ignoring any conflicting data (American Psychological Association).

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**OVERCOMING THE IMPACT OF BIAS**

What is the benefit of being aware of your biases as a workplace leader?

What can you do to overcome the impact of in-group bias and confirmation bias?

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A workshop on inclusive communication would be incomplete without covering some aspect of bias in our presentation.

Considering confirmation bias will help us minimize preconceptions and assumptions in our work. In-group bias can prevent us from being truly inclusive with those whose cultural and political experiences are different from our own.

Confirmation bias forms and reconfirms stereotypes we have about people, while information that refutes our expectations is ignored. We tend to remember stereotype-consistent information and to forget stereotype-inconsistent information, which is one way stereotypes are maintained even in the face of disconfirming evidence.

### FURTHER LEARNING

If you haven't taken [Harvard's Implicit Association Test](#), you may want to do so.

Novelist Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's TED Talk [The Danger of a Single Story](#) is a compelling example of the problems with confirmation bias.




The impact of bias in the workplace is much greater than our personal preferences. This article "[As Politics Heat Up, so Do Hiring Bias Worries](#)" examines the issues with selecting a candidate based upon their political affiliation.

It is important to note that one of the greatest issues around bias that workplace leaders face is the [bias between employees](#) who have different political beliefs. In the article, the authors point out that people often overestimate:

- 1) The level of disagreement between themselves and members of opposing political groups.
- 2) The prevalence of extreme beliefs among those groups.
- 3) The extent to which those people view them negatively, which the authors call "**false polarization bias.**" This can lead to unhealthy work environments. Workplace leaders have a clear responsibility to create an environment in which this is less likely to occur.

**TYPES OF COGNITIVE BIASES THAT BLOCK OUR ABILITY TO LEAD INCLUSIVELY**

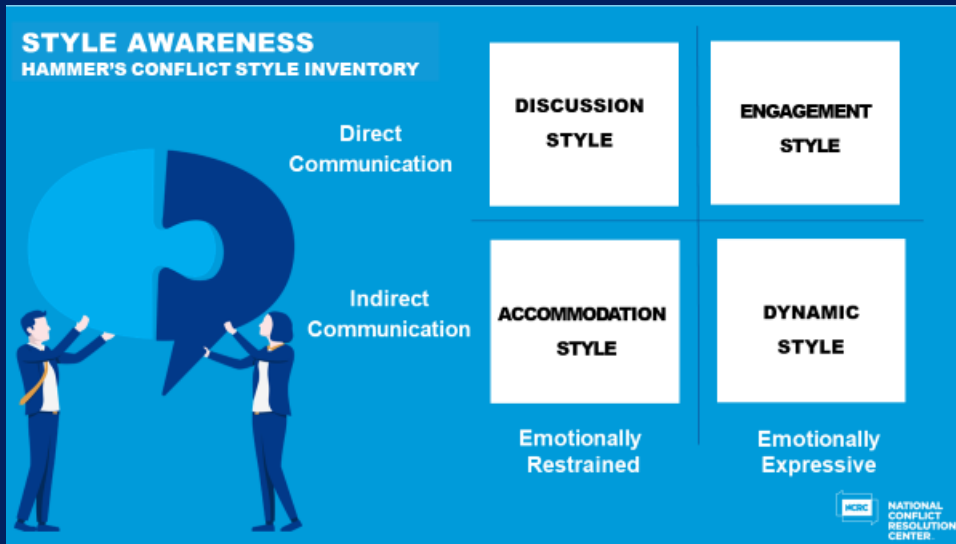


**Polarization Bias**  
Is the movement toward opposite extremes of a continuum of viewpoints or opinions.

**False Polarization Bias** is when one believes that those with opposing view are more extreme than they are, reinforcing additional polarization. (National Institute of Health)

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# Raising Awareness: Communication Styles



NCRC developed this exercise based on research by Dr. Mitchell Hammer to help leaders explore differences in communication styles. Understanding your default style and being able to identify the styles of others can help to create a collaborative and inclusive environment. Being responsive to the styles and needs of others is an important component of managing sensitive conversations.

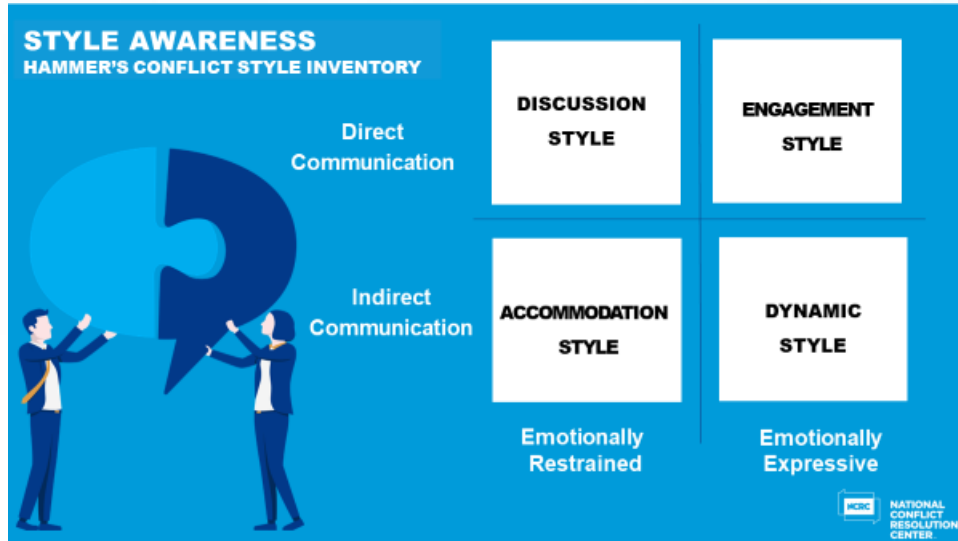
Each style has its strengths; no one style is better than the others. As humans, we are adaptive and can sometimes fluctuate between styles based on power dynamics or situations; however, we all have a default style we feel most comfortable using. Recognize that power dynamics in the workplace may play a role in whether someone expresses their style fully. Inclusive work environments honor authentic expression of individuals.

**BREAKOUT**

- What are the strengths of your style?
- How do we show respect to all styles on an ongoing basis?
- How would someone's style impact if or how they discuss hot topics?

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# Raising Awareness: Communication Styles



**Discussion-style** communicators tend to be verbally direct and emotionally restrained. They are clear and concise with their words and can set aside their emotions in the interest of problem-solving.

**Strengths:** Direct, clear, good at problem-solving and remaining objective

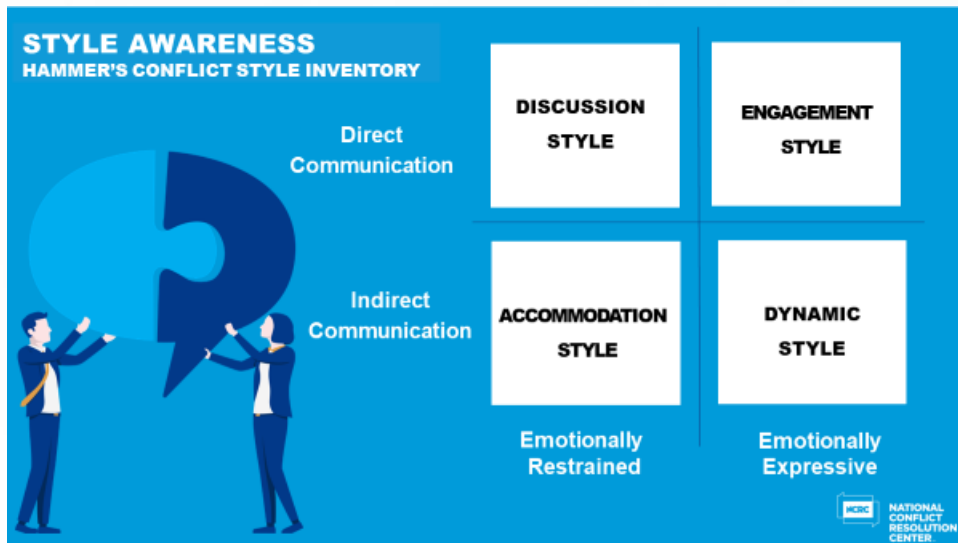
**Needs from others:** Directness, logic, calmness, transparency

**Engagement-style** communicators tend to be direct with their words and emotionally expressive. They value timely verbal and nonverbal expression and appreciate when others actively listen and validate their emotions.

**Strengths:** Vulnerability, transparency, compassion, openness

**Needs from others:** Emotional vulnerability, clear communication, openness, validation

# Raising Awareness: Communication Styles



## REFLECT

How would knowledge of these styles affect how you demonstrate that you are listening to employees?

**Accommodation-style** communicators tend to be indirect and emotionally restrained, which makes them the peacekeepers in relationships. During conflict, they may opt to just let the issue go, but when they choose to bring up something, they have put much thought into it.

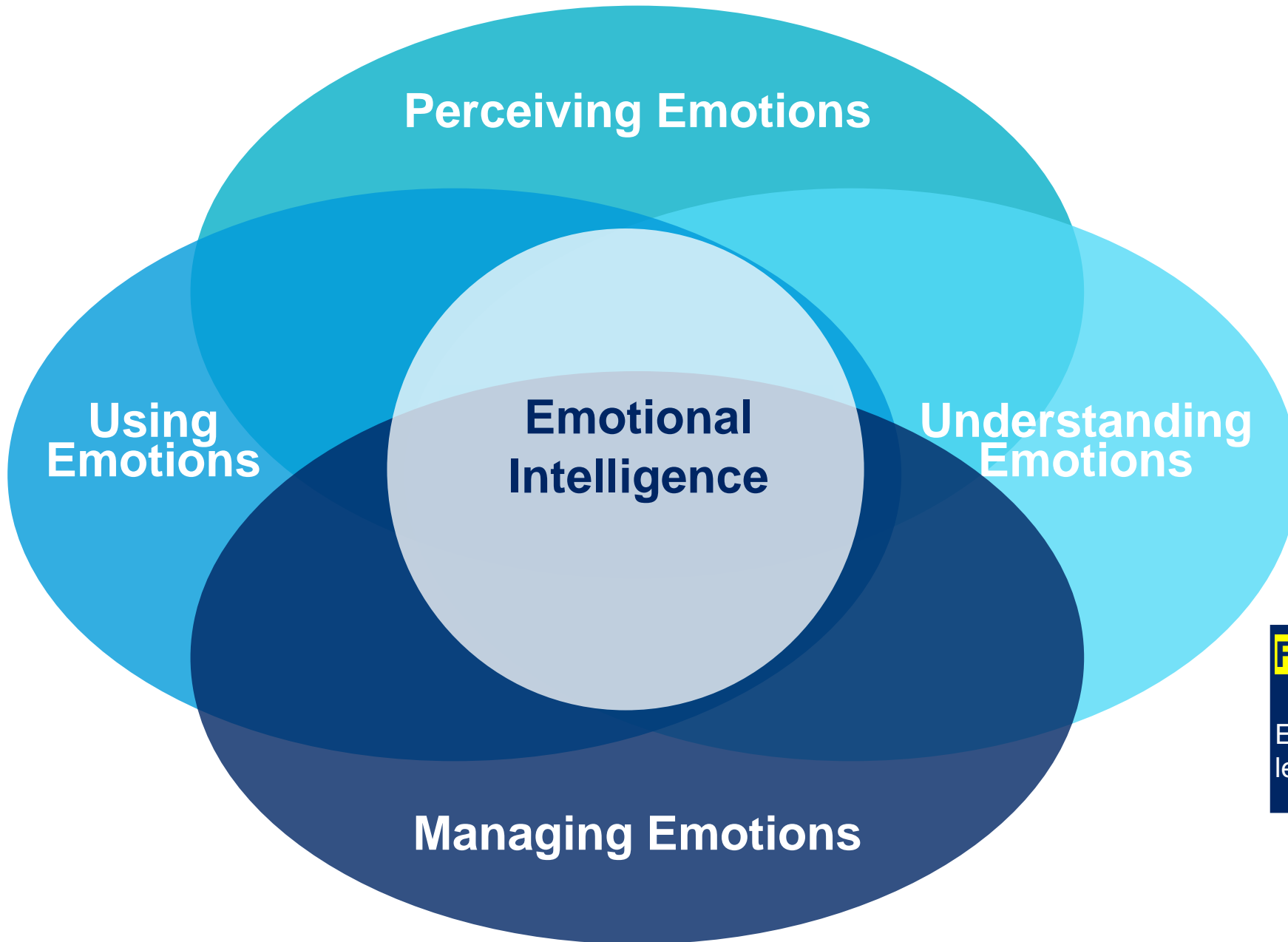
**Strengths:** Fair, observant, collaborative, unproblematic

**Needs from others:** Time, boundaries, acknowledgment

**Dynamic-style** communicators tend to show their emotions but are verbally indirect. During conflict resolution, they feel deeply and intuit the emotions of all involved. They need time to process their emotions before putting them into words.

**Strengths:** Intuitive, allows space for all to process, thinks before they speak, observant of others' emotional well-being

**Needs from others:** Space, time, patience, understanding, compassion



## **EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE**

### **FURTHER LEARNING**

Emotional Intelligence is key to inclusive leadership. [Learn more here.](#)

## Cultural Humility

A lifelong process of **continuing to learn** about, **be open** to, and **be respectful** of the **cultures** and **values** of others.

Cultural humility gives us a **greater understanding** of cultures that are different from our own and helps us **recognize** each person's **unique cultural experiences** and **expression**.

### BREAKOUT

- Identify one aspect of your life experience/identity/history that will help you maintain cultural humility.
- Identify one aspect of your life experience/identity/history that will challenge you to be culturally humble.

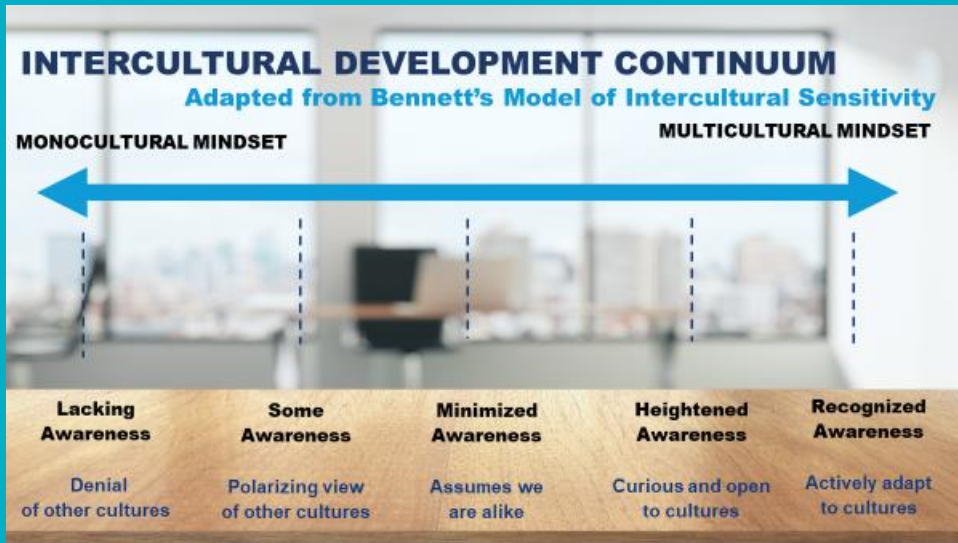


**Cultural Humility** There is an increased awareness of the need for cultural humility as we interact with others. It began with social workers and clinicians realizing that they have a responsibility to their clients/patients to treat them and their cultural values with respect. It has now spread to the way to think about being inclusive. If one does not have cultural humility, how can one truly treat others with dignity? Leaders who display cultural humility **create more inclusive teams**.

Cultural humility entails a combination of awareness, attitude, skills, practice, and last, embodiment. Taken from a culturally humble perspective, the ART of Inclusive Communication helps us to be more aware of our interactions with others. We build skills to communicate and listen better, and, with practice, we can embody cultural humility.

## FURTHER LEARNING

**Cultural fluency** means familiarity with cultures: their natures, how they work, and ways they intertwine with our relationships in times of conflict and harmony. Cultural fluency means awareness of several dimensions of culture, including communication. Inclusive leaders have competency in these three areas: Emotional Intelligence (see next page), Cognitive Agility, Cultural Fluency.



It can be useful when working with people in intercultural environments to consider your own cultural mindset and how it relates to your views on sensitive issues around identity.

As a workplace leader, it's important to consider the fact that people are at different points on this continuum.

### BREAKOUT

- Where would you place yourself on this continuum?
- Share about a time when you were at a different place and what led to your growth.

## FURTHER LEARNING

Learn more about the Intercultural Development Inventory [here](#).

The IDI is a robust assessment that measures you on a reliable intercultural development continuum. You receive two scores: one is where you perceive yourself, and the other is where the instrument measures you. A debrief session after the assessment helps you process this information for your continued growth.

# Tips for Interaction Intercultural Development Continuum

With **ACTIVE AWARENESS**, it is important for you, as a leader, to be aware of your own biases and reactions to the individual. Maintaining a stance of nonjudgement is important.

**RESPONDING RESPECTFULLY** to the individual, asking thoughtful questions, using humble inquiry, and maintaining a curious stance. This is where you can acknowledge their emotions and experiences without agreeing with their conclusions. As much as possible, connect their comments to their needs (instead of reinforcing their stereotypes). This allows you to maintain that neutral stance.

Lastly, with **TROUBLESHOOT TOGETHER**, helping the employee see that others have different perspectives is critical for moving forward. Then you can help them see the value of working with others, despite their different perspectives.



**A CTIVE AWARENESS**

- ▶ Remain nonjudgmental of the other person
- ▶ Refrain from projecting your mindset onto the employee
- ▶ Manage your neutrality/Check your reaction

**R ESPOND RESPECTFULLY**

- ▶ Utilize questions to engage the individual
- ▶ Acknowledge emotions and experiences
- ▶ Connect what they are saying to their needs

**T ROUBLESHOOT TOGETHER**

- ▶ Help them gain better understanding of (not agreement with) of the others' perspectives
- ▶ Focus on needs in order to work comfortably despite the different perspectives

**TIPS FROM THE INTERCULTURAL DEVELOPMENT INVENTORY ON INTERACTING WITH OTHERS**

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# Tips for Interaction Intercultural Development Continuum

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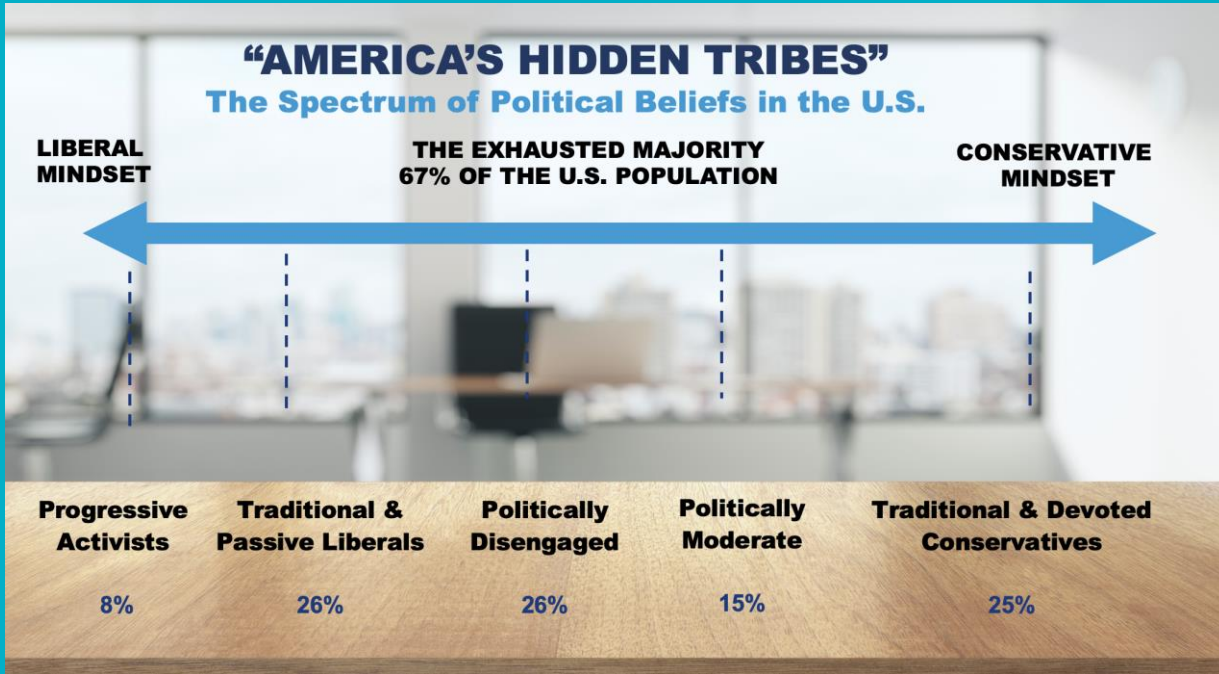
## REFLECT

Others will demonstrate different mindsets about cultural awareness. Which of these mindsets would be the most challenging for you to support?

NCRC credits the Intercultural Development Inventory for their work in utilizing this continuum as a tool in understanding and promoting racial justice. We have incorporated some lessons from their approach in the framework of the ARTful Conversation. They are worth reinforcing.

The IDI focuses on ways that individuals can be supported in their growth. These are adapted for consideration by workplace leaders in their interactions with others.

## FURTHER LEARNING: A CONTINUUM OF POLITICAL BELIEFS



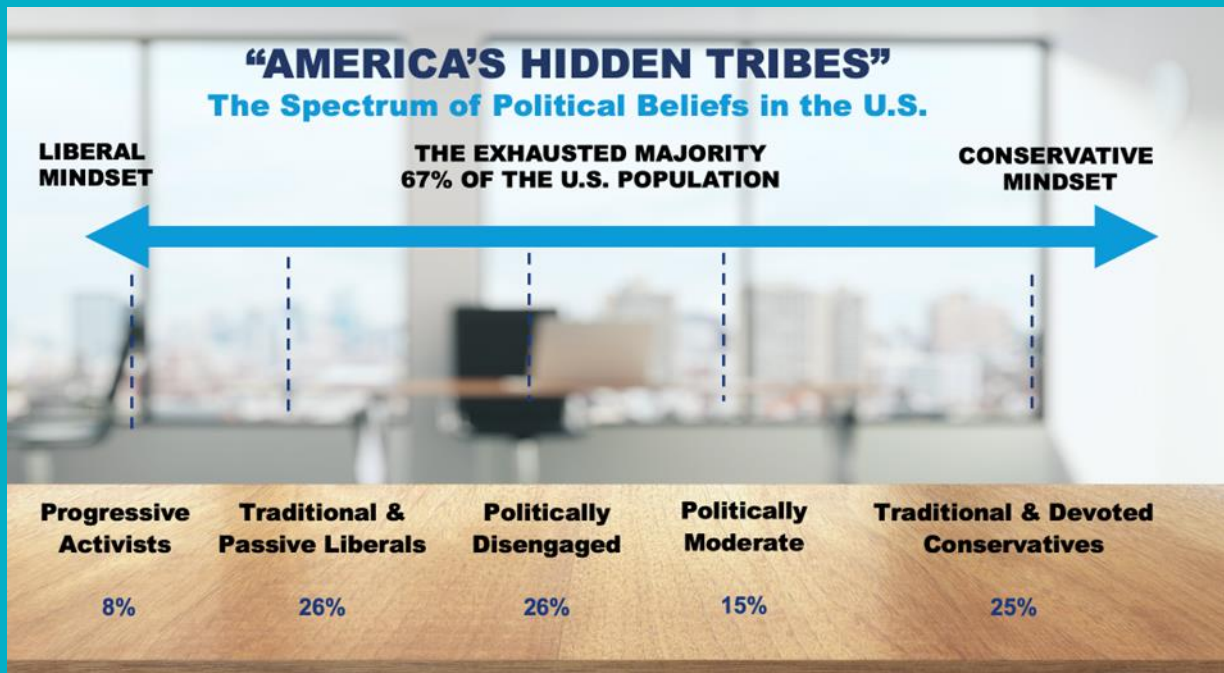
FURTHER LEARNING: It can be useful to acknowledge that employees can fall anywhere on the spectrum of political beliefs. Although this is also true for workplace leaders, the ability to remain neutral while in the workplace is expected and shows good leadership qualities.

The question becomes how to help employees navigate conversations for those who wish to take part in them in a way that respects the needs of both the speaker and the listener. Other employees who are impacted have workplace needs that should be respected as well. [Here is an example](#) in a family situation, utilizing [NCRC’s Tip #7](#). Johnny C. Taylor, CEO of SHRM (Society of Human Resource Management), shared in [“We Are More Than Our Differences”](#) that “we don’t have the right to be agreed with, but we do have the right to be heard respectfully.” **How do leaders create safety for all employees?**

### FURTHER LEARNING

Learn more about [“Hidden Tribes: A Study of America’s Polarized Landscape” here.](#)

Please note that we use the word “tribe” here based on the researchers’ framing of the different group associations.



**QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER:** If the answer to these questions is no, perhaps the employee may reconsider discussing the topic with their coworkers:

- Is the employee able to consider other points of view that may differ from their own on this topic?
- Does the employee think that someone may have something to teach them?
- Can the employee find common ground with those who differ from them on the topic?

## FURTHER LEARNING:

Employees can fall anywhere on the spectrum of cultural awareness. Although this is also true for workplace leaders, the ability to remain open while in the workplace is expected and shows good leadership qualities.

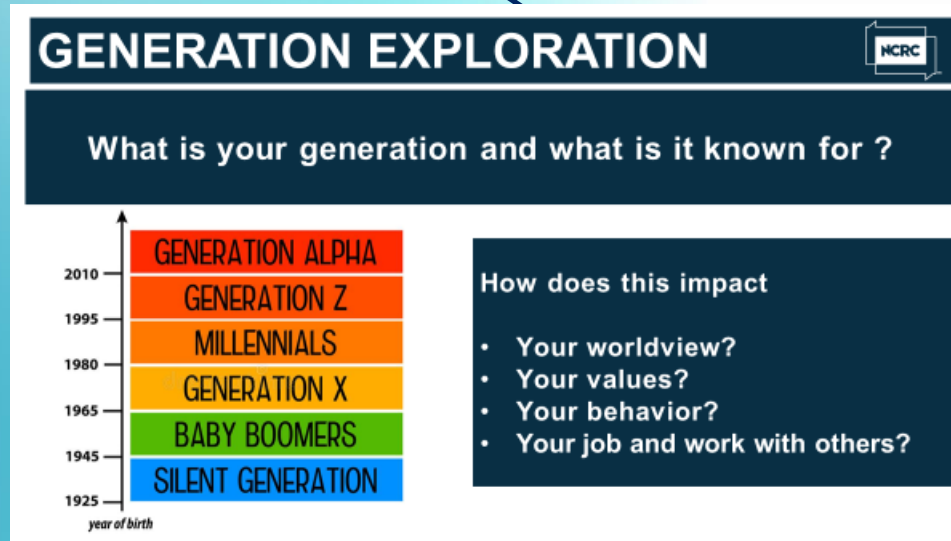
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# Generational Challenges in the Workplace

Generational diversity is an important component of our workplaces. People from different generations bring different experiences, worldviews, and skill sets to the workplace. Teams with individuals of different ages are more productive.

At the same time, these generational differences (think workstyles, values, and fluency with technology as some examples) can also lead to misunderstandings and conflict. Awareness of these intergenerational differences is key to being an inclusive leader.

[This survey](#) looked at people's beliefs about generational differences. Applying the knowledge about these generational differences is valuable for workplace leaders. [This article](#) looks at each generation, with special emphasis on Generation Z. Many workplace leaders are Baby Boomers, Generation X, and Millennials, so learning more about attracting, retaining, and engaging with the growing number of Generation Z employees is valuable.



# Conclusion



**The ART of Inclusive Communication**

- Humble Inquiry
- A Leader's Sources of Power
- Bias
- Conflict Styles
- Intercultural Development Continuum
- Generation Exploration

**What is one takeaway for you from today's session?**

**WHAT'S NEXT**

- Watch "Building a Society Based on Belonging"
- Next Week: The Bystander Challenge

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**Thank you for your participation in the ART of Inclusive Communication. We look forward to seeing you in The Bystander Challenge: Building Belonging.**



**Empowering People. Transforming Cultures.**