

VA



U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs  
Veterans Health Administration  
*Office of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion*



# INCLUSIVE INTELLIGENCE

Your Guide to Sustaining Inclusive  
Behaviors in the Workplace





## Leveraging Inclusive Intelligence

The mission of VHA's Office of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion is to create and sustain a diverse, inclusive and safe work environment where all employees can perform at their maximum potential to achieve excellence; with a vision to foster an inclusive and equitable culture where our Employees, Veterans, and their Families are treated with dignity and respect. We believe our mission is most effectively fulfilled through a commitment to inclusion as a core value and practice.

This guide focuses on Inclusive Intelligence which is the creation and sustainment of inclusive behaviors in the workplace. Additionally, this guide discusses unconscious bias and micro-inequities which negatively impact the workplace environment.



Inclusion is the degree to which an employee perceives that they are an esteemed member of the work group through their need for belongingness and uniqueness.

Inclusive Intelligence explores how individual behaviors, repeated over time, form the habits that help create an inclusive environment. These behaviors can be learned, practiced, and developed and lead to a more inclusive workplace and higher awareness of inclusive habits by employees. We must intentionally, deliberately, and proactively include; otherwise we will unintentionally exclude. Everyone brings something to the mix.

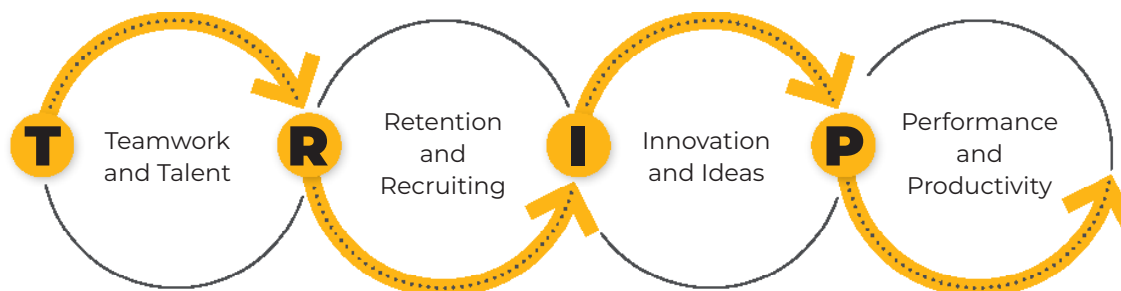
Inclusive Intelligence is a way of working that focuses on how to make the entire team—rather than individuals—smarter and more creative. It views inclusive intelligence as the most important intelligence of the future. By using inclusive intelligence insights, we can harness the diversity of ideas, identities, and information in such a way that every team member feels accepted and acknowledged for their contributions. By using these new techniques, we can create and sustain a highly engaged workforce.

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## Five Inclusive Habits (F.O.C.S.E) Pronounced FOCUS

- Fair** Exhibit a disposition that is free of favoritism and bias; impartiality
- Open** Be free of a closed mind and be receptive to new ideas, viewpoints, and people
- Cooperative** Work or act together willingly for common purpose or benefit
- Supportive** Constructively help others
- Empowering** Help others contribute to their full potential

When managing in an inclusive way, we harness diverse ideas, identities, and information. Using inclusive behaviors positively impacts the T.R.I.P. components.



The habits and components compliment the Veteran's Affairs "I CARE" values.  
**"FOCSE on the TRIP because I CARE"**

## Benefits to Incorporating Inclusion

- Enhance employee engagement and build trust
- Improve communication and creativity
- Reduce turnover and sustain diversity
- Increase team collaboration and productivity

## How To Improve Your Inclusive Intelligence

By incorporating Inclusive Intelligence you will need to learn, practice, and incorporate the Five Inclusive Habits in your daily routine. By being fair, open, cooperative, supportive and empowering to your employees and peers you will foster an inclusive culture and ensure VHA remains the premier healthcare service provider in the nation.

## 3 Steps To Creating New Habits



### 01. Shrink the Change

First, simplify the behavior. Make it tiny. A good tiny behavior is easy to do and fast. Example: give employees an opportunity to contribute their ideas and comments.



### 02. Find A Spot

Insert this tiny new behavior in your existing routine. Example: By incorporating Inclusive Intelligence you will need to regularly ask for employees to contribute their ideas and comments.



### 03. Train the cycle every day

Now focus on doing the tiny behavior as part of your routine. Soon, the tiny behavior will become automatic. Example: include time in the meeting agenda for team member input.

## Unconscious Bias : A Barrier To Inclusion

A common barrier to fostering an inclusive environment is Unconscious Bias. Everyone holds unconscious beliefs and this occurs when our brain makes incredibly quick judgments and assessments of people and situations without us realizing it. Our biases are influenced by our background, cultural environment, and personal experiences. When bias affects an organization, employees can be less engaged; recruiting and retention efforts can be damaged; and employee morale and productivity can be lower.

## Tips To Manage Unconscious Bias

### **Accept that you have biases.**

If you have a brain, you have biases. Take the first step to manage them by seeking to know and understand your own.

**Question Yourself.** Once you recognize one of your biases, ask yourself, “Is what I am thinking based on facts or assumptions?” “Am I reacting to something or someone from my past?” “Can I put it aside and learn about this person for who they are?”

### **Step out of your comfort zone.**

Conversations about diversity, equity and inclusion and other workplace concerns can be uncomfortable. To have a meaningful dialogue, it may be necessary for you to “get comfortable with being uncomfortable.”

**Reach out to those who you see as “different.”** Seek to experience and associate with people and groups that you see as different from you. It helps you increase your understanding, reduce negative assumptions, grow in empathy, and expand your perspective.

**Be open. Give others the benefit of the doubt.** Our assumptions about others may be wrong. Practice inclusive

habits: be open, fair, and cooperative with coworkers; look for ways to empower every team member.

**Give up the idea of perfection, for yourself and for others.** Everyone has flaws, including you. Give up the need for situations and people to be perfect and work on accepting people for who they are and what they bring to the table.

**Focus on yourself.** You can’t do much about other peoples’ prejudices or biases. Lead by example, and others may start to see things from your point of view.

**Respect others.** Even in disagreement, there can be respectful conversation about different ideas and perspectives. And, sometimes in the end, you have to agree to disagree.

**When you make a mistake, own it.** When you offend someone or make a mistake, acknowledge it and apologize. No one is perfect. Taking responsibility for your mistakes goes a long way toward building trust and stronger relationships.




## Three Social Biases

**Like-Me:** Giving preferential treatment to members of a group to which you belong

**Confirmation:** Seeking evidence that supports what you already believe

**Stereotyping:** A preconceived idea that certain attributes, characteristics, and behaviors are typical of members of a particular group



We all play a part in creating and sustaining an inclusive work environment. Committing to inclusivity positively impacts work climate.

### Micro-Inequities

These are subtle slights we send other people, usually unconscious actions that may cause someone to feel devalued, slighted, discouraged, and/or excluded. Some examples include:

- ▶ **01.** Constantly interrupting someone while they are talking
- ▶ **02.** Looking at your watch when someone is talking to you
- ▶ **03.** Not introducing someone in a meeting and then ignoring them
- ▶ **04.** Dismissing ideas before they can be entertained
- ▶ **05.** Leaving a team member out of a discussion/project

### Micro-Affirmations

Micro-affirmations are subtle or small acknowledgements of a person's value and accomplishments. Some examples include:

- ▶ **01.** Giving positive feedback on a job well done
- ▶ **02.** Asking others for their opinion
- ▶ **03.** Provide comfort and support during stressful situations
- ▶ **04.** Congratulating someone on their promotion or contribution
- ▶ **05.** Recognition of a coworker's importance to the team

### Taking Action

We all play a part in creating and sustaining an inclusive work environment. Committing to inclusivity positively impacts work climate. Inclusion is essential to VHA accomplishing its honorable mission and commitment to America's Veterans. If you have any questions contact the VHA's Office of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion.



**YOU**

*can*

**DO IT!**

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