

THE COLOURS WITHIN US: INCLUSIVE COMMUNICATION GUIDE





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The boundaries we create between people are often not real; they are just stories built on habits. Once we dare to rewrite those stories, we will no longer be guests in each other's houses, and instead, we will become the residents living in the rooms of the same house.

INTRODUCTION



Language shapes our perception and interpretation of the world; it defines how we think and behave with respect to the outside world. The words we choose when communicating reflect our assumptions about the outer world, including differences and equality. The meaning of reality is not well established as a social phenomenon; but rather is constructed through language and discourse. Words not only imply definitions, but also carry values, power relations, and social acceptances.

There are definitions that are dominant in the society, but also alternative perspectives questioning prevailing meanings and revealing diversity.



In this context, it is also possible to ensure transformation in the meaning accorded to reality and hence in thoughts and behaviours through changing the language used for communication and managing the content of communication means and tools. We must keep in mind that language has both the power of promoting inclusivity, or conversely, exacerbating exclusionary attitudes. The purpose of this guide is to raise awareness about how language used in communication can be shaped with an inclusive approach and to offer practical tools that will empower inclusivity in daily interactions. It aims to promote the use of the transformative power of language to create an environment in which everyone feels valued and included.

INCLUSIVE COMMUNICATION

CHAPTER 1

WHAT IS INCLUSIVE COMMUNICATION?

Inclusion is about creating an environment recognizing the uniqueness and fragility of human existence, allowing each individual to add meaning through their own story, language and creativity, and valuing the worth of being together based on shared values rather than identities.

Communication plays a quite critical role in creating an inclusive environment. Communication builds bridges between individuals, allowing everyone to express themselves and feel valued. While all forms of expression we use (speech, writing, sign language, visuals, and body language) can strengthen the sense of inclusion, they can also create an exclusionary effect when used carelessly. Therefore, it is of high importance that the language used is bias-free, respectful, and understanding.

Sometimes, people can use non-inclusive language without even realizing it and this can lead to unintentional exclusion. That is why both the context and the person we are communicating with serve as important guides in determining the right approach. Inclusion is a never-ending learning process; it is about constantly keeping an eye on growth and learning how to make language more inclusive. Whenever we make a mistake, we should take it for what it is: a chance to learn for the next time. Also, we should be aware that even if some expressions are socially acceptable, this does not mean they are always appropriate in a work setting.



WHAT IS NOT INCLUSIVE COMMUNICATION?

- Inclusive communication is not just about following company policies. Real inclusion is about adopting a language and attitudes which make everyone feel valued and respected for their feelings, thoughts, and identities in every interaction, from everyday conversations to statements and discussions in meetings.
- Inclusive communication is not just about changing the language used. Rather, it is a process demanding a transformation in behaviours and attitudes. Language is a part of inclusion, but it is crucial to make this approach visible in all interactions.
- Inclusive communication is not something you can do once and then forget about. It involves a continuous effort and learning process constantly renewing itself and ensuring everyone is included.
- Inclusive communication is not something that can be done simply by one person or group. Instead, it is a responsibility falling on the entire organization or community, and an approach requiring everyone to contribute.
- Inclusive communication may not encompass every situation or everyone with a single method; therefore, it demands a constantly evolving and unique process of understanding, sensitive to a variety of backgrounds and needs.





THE IMPORTANCE OF INCLUSIVE COMMUNICATION

- **Builds Stronger Communication Links**

Inclusive communication cultivates understanding and empathy among individuals with a variety of backgrounds, experiences, and identities. In turn, this helps foster stronger, mutual trust-based communication relationships.

- **Increases Diversity and Participation**

An inclusive communication environment allows each individual to feel valued and respected. This, in turn, promotes wider participation and greater diversity in decision-making processes.

- **Promotes Creativity and Innovation**

Inclusion cultivates creativity by bringing together diverse points of view, experiences, and mindsets. An environment where each individual can freely express themselves and where their ideas are valued allows for the emergence of solutions and innovative ideas going beyond the conventional. Where diversity is embraced in a safe and respectful environment, creativity is both deepened and enriched.

- **Creates Healthier and More Productive Work Environments**

An inclusive communication environment contributes to the reduction of stress and conflicts. People work more productively and with greater motivation once they feel safe and valued.

- **Supports Fairness**

Inclusive communication is crucial for creating an environment where fairness is upheld and diversity is valued. This leads to a fair decision-making and implementation. Fairness means that everyone is given equal opportunities and resources are distributed fairly and equitably.

- **Fosters Social Equality**

Inclusive communication provides equal rights and opportunities, thus, reducing discrimination, and creating an environment of equal participation for all. This environment promotes awareness in various areas such as gender equality, ethnicity, and disability.

GENDER-SENSITIVE
COMMUNICATION

CHAPTER 2

WHAT IS GENDER EQUALITY?

The term 'sex' defines a category generally determined by specific biological characteristics; however, this classification is a process of construction that is constantly reproduced through social norms and scientific discourse. Gender, however, is not just about biological assumptions; and it refers to a set of meanings which can change over time and are shaped by culture, power relations, and historical context. The binary gender system governs existence within a heteronormative framework, while rendering intersex, non-binary and other identities invisible. Therefore, gender is not just a fixed and "natural" reality, but rather is an every-changing, fluid and multifaceted structure constantly negotiated through language, discourse, and relationships.

Gender equality stands for the fact that individuals can, regardless of their sex, enjoy equal rights and have fair and equal access to resources in every aspect of life; freely make their decisions according to their own preferences; develop their personal knowledge and skills in all areas they wish and realize their potential to the fullest extent possible.

Gender equality is a key requirement for implementing human rights; however, equality is not just about the "equal" distribution of opportunities, but rather about questioning for whom and under which conditions these opportunities become meaningful. The expression of equality remains superficial without considering the power of dynamics between genders, historically established power relations, and the reproduction of heteronormative structures. A real transformation can only be achieved when individuals, regardless of their gender, have access to rights and resources in every aspect of life; and when all other identities outside the binary gender system also become visible and included. This understanding seeks not only to achieve economic independence and fair sharing in decision-making processes, but also aims to transform the social structure itself.

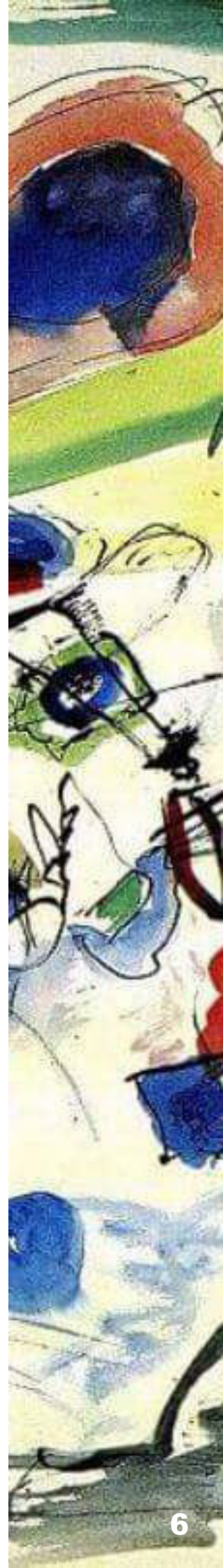


LANGUAGE, EQUALITY AND GENDER: LET'S SEE THE LINK

In contrast to languages such as English, German, French or Spanish, etc., there is no distinction between masculine and feminine in Turkish words. Furthermore, the third person pronoun "o" is used in the same way to include all gender identities. These structural properties do not mean that Turkish language is completely free from sexism. On the contrary, there are some words, expressions, idioms, and proverbs carrying traces of gender bias as the language has been shaped by historical, social, and cultural contexts.

Although the word "adam (*man*)", commonly used in colloquial language, is mostly considered as a gender-neutral word, this usage poses a risk of rendering women's experience and contributions invisible. In a study by Casey Miller and Kate Swift conducted in 1976, students selected images of both women and men for the contents provided under the headings such as "Society", "Business Life", and "Political Behaviour", but they tended to select images of men only when the same contents were provided under the headings such as "Social Man", "Business Man" and "Political Man". This clearly reveals that the word "adam (*man*)" is unequivocally associated with the male figure in people's minds. This experiment represented a milestone in the history of feminism, triggering the use of gender-fair language. For example, "*chair*" instead of "*chairman*", "*police officer*" instead of "*policeman*", and "*they*" instead of "*he/she*".

Stereotypical gender roles reflected in language may limit individuals' roles, duties, and potentials. Actually, jobs don't have a gender; they have qualities. Therefore, it is of great importance to use a language that is inclusive, equality-oriented, and sensitive in communication. For example, expressions such as "Dear mothers, please bake cookies for our class party" should be avoided and replaced with inclusive alternatives such as "Dear parents, ...".





WHY DO WE NEED TO REVIEW OUR WORDS?

Means of mass communication plays an important role in reproduction of traditional roles and values. The language and visual materials used in media directly influence individuals' perception of the world. Therefore, the use of a language sensitive to gender equality in media and corporate communication spreads this sensitivity to wider audiences and speeds up social transformation.

What does Your Language say?		
I may not be always providing equal representation of men and women in visuals.	☐	☐
I cannot say that I manage to be gender-neutral when using professional titles.	☐	☐

These questions are intended to assess your level of awareness regarding inclusive communication.

Each item shows how much attention you pay to inclusion in day-to-day language, visual preferences, and professional practices. You can check out the results of the “Inclusion Awareness Measurement” on page 36.



INCLUSIVE APPROACH TO GENDER IN VISUALS

Ensure that human diversity is visible in all your communication materials; pay attention to the fair and balanced representation of gender identities, gender expressions, and body diversity.

Make sure that your visuals represent gender identities and expressions in a way that is not reduced to stereotypical or traditional roles.

Avoid using images that depict disadvantaged individuals solely as the victims.

Avoid depicting and promoting individuals merely on the basis of their gender identities.

Avoid using visual contents that perpetuate stereotypical gender-related judgements.

Choose visuals reflecting gender roles in a balanced and inclusive manner.

EXPRESSIONS PERPETUATING GENDER STEREOTYPES IN BUSINESS LIFE

Expressions of sincerity:

Informal forms of sincerity should only be used where mutually agreed upon by the parties and where the context is appropriate; and everyone's name or preferred form of address should be used in formal or mixed environments.

Terms referring to Sex:

It is inappropriate to address someone as 'girl', 'my son' or 'bro' in a work environment since it may suggest youth or inexperience based on their age or experience. Instead, addressing someone by their name or preferred form of address ensures professional and equality-based communication.

Gender-Based Adjectives:

Behaviours in decision-making processes may be labelled with unfavourable adjectives based on gender-based biases. The same behaviour may be interpreted differently according to gender identities. Calling someone who wants to defend their opinion in a meeting "ambitious" and another person "determined" merely based on their gender identity compromises inclusive communication.

Biological Properties:

Avoid expressions emphasizing biological processes such as 'adolescent', 'menopausal', 'in andropause' or references to pregnancy/fatherhood. Such language may create prejudice; instead, prefer to express the situation in a neutral and respectful manner as deemed contextually appropriate.

Physical and Personal Preferences:

It is inappropriate to make comments about height, weight, age, or clothing styles.



BODY POSITIVITY –
PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

CHAPTER 3



BODY POSITIVITY- PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

Physical appearance is the reflection of physical measurements, genetic characteristics, health status, lifestyle, environmental conditions, and cultural influences as a whole. In society, there are widespread prejudices regarding individuals' body weights and this may lead to unfavourable consequences for both psychological and physical health. When these stigmatizing attitudes are internalized, individuals may experience a loss of self-esteem and may even choose to avoid healthcare services. Therefore, it is crucially important to use a sensitive language when communicating about the body. Labelling or judgemental expressions should be replaced with a neutral and respectful language that honours the individual's experience and integrity. Instead of categorical definitions like 'thin' or 'fat', a language respecting the individual's own preferences and consent should be used; and neutral and respectful terms such as 'low body weight' or 'high body weight' can be used where necessary.

The body positivity approach takes into account not only biases related to weight, but also how these biases intersect with other social inequalities. The intersectionality perspective demonstrates that stigmatization based on body size may give rise to multi-layered discrimination, especially when combined with categories such as gender, age, ethnicity, and class. For example, women, elderly people, or individuals belonging to certain ethnic groups may be judged not only on the basis of their weight, but also on the basis of gender roles, age-related prejudices, or class inequalities when they have a non-standard body weight. These intersecting prejudices further challenge both self-esteem and access to healthcare services, thereby having a more profound impact on overall health and quality of life.

BODY POSITIVITY – PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

In communication about body weight, not only scientific data but also the effects of prevailing beliefs in society on individuals should be taken into account. Especially when weight is seen as entirely a matter of personal choice or control, it can result in unfair and negative judgements about individuals. However, body weight is shaped by a combination of many factors, including genetic, metabolic, psychological, socioeconomic, environmental, and cultural factors. For example, some people may be genetically predisposed to have a slower metabolism or may put on weight differently despite having the same diet. Individuals with low income may have difficulty accessing healthy foods, while others living in neighbourhoods with limited safe open spaces may not have opportunities for regular physical activity.

Therefore, weight is a multi-dimensional issue that cannot be explained solely by individual willpower.

In addition, stress, mental health issues, chronic health issues and the side effects of some medications can also be determinants of body weight. When these multi-dimensional factors are ignored and weight is solely reduced to a matter of personal willpower, stigmatizing approaches such as “laziness” or “lack of willpower” arise. Such language not only damages individuals’ psychological well-being, but can also diminish their motivation to adopt healthy lifestyle habits.

What does Your Language say?



I always think of similar body measurements when it comes to healthy appearance.



On some occasions, I have provided positive feedback on changes in body measurements.



POINTS TO CONSIDER IN VISUAL COMMUNICATION

Obsessions with body weight in society are perpetuated by stereotypical notions of beauty conveyed through media and cultural discourse. The promotion of a single body-type perceptions not also puts pressure on individuals, but also renders diversity invisible, and serves to reinforce unhealthy body perceptions.

However, images that represent every body with dignity, respect and diversity help each individual feel valued, while also fostering the development of more inclusive attitudes in society.

Visual Approaches to be Avoided:

Avoid visuals focusing on and idealizing certain parts of the body.

Avoid visuals associating body size or appearance with prejudices.

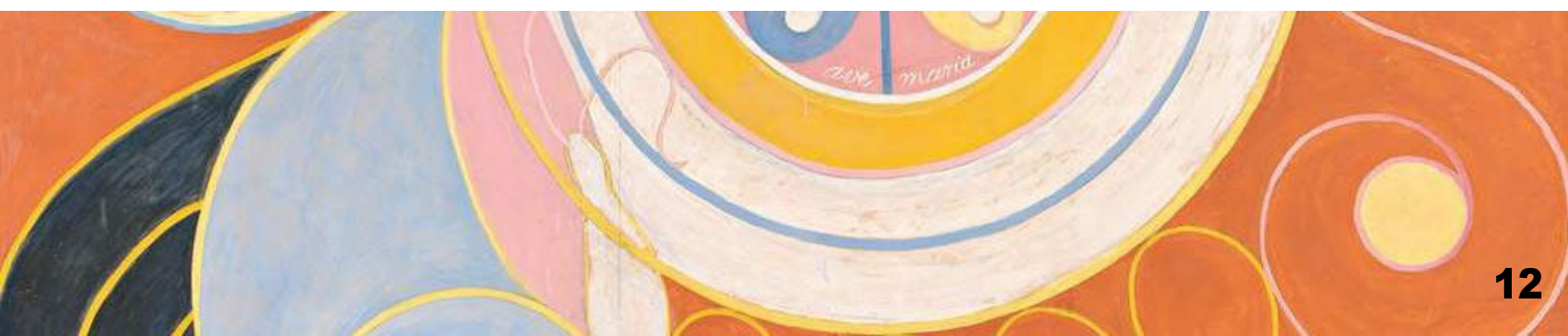
Avoid visuals depicting specific food or beverage groups negatively or mockingly.

Visual Approaches to be Preferred:

Use visuals representing diverse body shapes naturally, honourably, and respectfully.

Representation of individuals of varied gender, age, appearance, and background.

Use visuals promoting healthy life in diversity.



DISABILITY

CHAPTER 4

DISABILITY

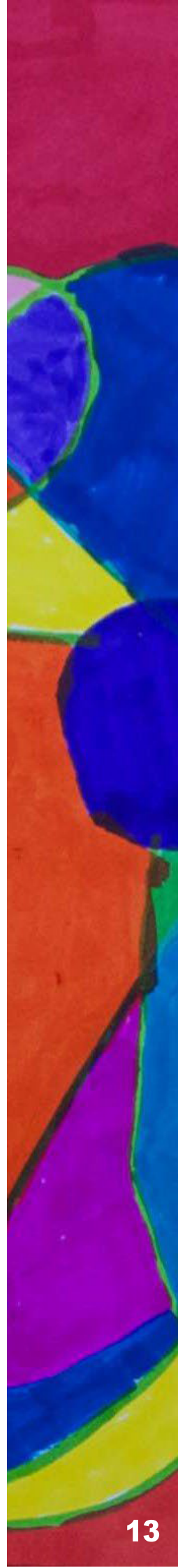
The term “disability” has historically emerged not only to describe an individual’s physical or psychosocial health, but also to reveal how the social order constructs “normality”. Even the term itself characterizes individuals based on a deficiency or inadequacy; thus, placing people with certain experiences into a specific category. However, disability is not only an individual condition, but also a result of social norms, spatial arrangements, and cultural expectations.

Therefore, disability should not be seen as a label defining individuals’ identities; but rather as a name for experiences arising from their interaction with social structures. In other words, disability does not stem from a “natural” deficiency, but from the social, spatial, and institutional arrangements leading to the impediment.

Sometimes stairs, sometimes prejudices at workplaces, and sometimes language itself creates the “impediment”.

Therefore, defining individuals as “disabled” means reducing their identity to a single attribute. This reduction reinforces social prejudices, rendering exclusionary practices invisible. Instead, using a language focusing on individuals’ experiences allows us to view people as whole beings.

An inclusive communication language does not identify individuals through illness, disability, or labels. On the contrary, it recognizes that unique experiences are a part of social diversity. Such language respectfully honours people’s dignity and serves as a reminder that social life is built not only on “norms”, but also on the coexistence of diversities.



Terms to Avoid and Suggested Alternatives

In inclusive communication, it is necessary to carefully choose the language used to describe disability so that it reflects the dignity and experiences of individuals. Accordingly, terms to avoid and suggested expressions are provided below.

Terms to Avoid	Why to Avoid?	Suggested Inclusive Alternative
Handicapped	Derogatory and stigmatizing language	Disabled person
Normal people	Positions the disabled person as "abnormal".	All individuals, everyone
Illness	Disability is not always an illness.	Disability status
Very successful despite their disability	Considering disability as an obstacle involves bias.	A successful individual
They can do it like normal people.	Depicts the disabled person as "abnormal".	They can do it.
They can't do this job, because they are disabled	Can devalue individuals' abilities and work capacity.	How to provide suitable conditions for this role?



Points to Consider

- **Use Sensitive and Respectful Expressions**

Individuals with disabilities are not just representatives of a group; they each have their own unique identity and experiences. Therefore, it is important to avoid pitying, degrading, or exclusionary expressions when discussing disability in order to establish a symmetrical relationship.

- **Listen Patiently and Carefully**

It may take some individuals longer to express themselves. In such cases, be patient, listen to them without interrupting, and allow them time to finish. If you don't understand, ask them to repeat politely instead of pretending that you understand. This is a good way to demonstrate respect for their right to communicate and their self-confidence.

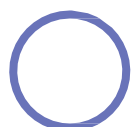
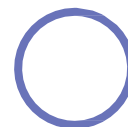
- **Avoid Prejudices and Assumptions**

A person's disability does not necessarily call for prejudice about what tasks they can perform. Each individual has different capacities and preferences. It is best to ask the person directly and allow them to set their own boundaries, rather than making decisions for them about what they can and cannot do. This attitude fosters the individual's autonomy and dignity.

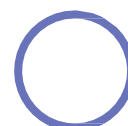
What does Your Language say?



I can't always clearly determine how regularly and effectively I review the accessibility of physical and digital spaces.



I tend to help directly when I think a person with a disability needs assistance.





Points to Consider

- **Avoid Asking Questions About Their Disability**

One's disability is only a part of their identity and a matter of their private life. Such questions are often made out of curiosity and may lead to objectification of the individual. In an inclusive approach, priority is given to supporting the individual's participation and comfort; they will bring up their experiences themselves if they wish to share them.

- **Each Individual has Equal Value and the Right to Make Decisions**

People with disabilities are unique individuals that can make their own decisions. It is necessary to define them by their individual characteristics, instead of defining them solely by their disabilities. Overexerting attention or ignoring them may be detrimental to the individual's self-perception and communication process.

- **Ask Permission Before Helping**

Just because an individual has a disability does not necessarily mean that they always need external help. Many people with disabilities are able to live their daily lives independently when they are provided with the right conditions. Whenever you want to help, kindly offer your assistance first instead of intervening directly. This approach is a respectful mode of communication upholding the individual's independence and right to make decisions.

- **Be Sensitive About Physical Contact**

Some individuals with disabilities rely on assistive devices to keep their balance or move around. Touching their devices such as wheelchairs, crutches, or white canes without prior permission may compromise the individual's physical balance and cause discomfort. Whenever you want to help, let the individual guide you to allow them to maintain their comfort and control.

- **Communicate Directly with the Individual**

When communicating with someone with a disability, talk directly to the individual concerned, not to their companion, assistant, or sign language interpreter. Maintaining eye contact and showing respect for the individual's communication style reinforce their social participation and self-worth.

How to Provide an Inclusive Work Environment?

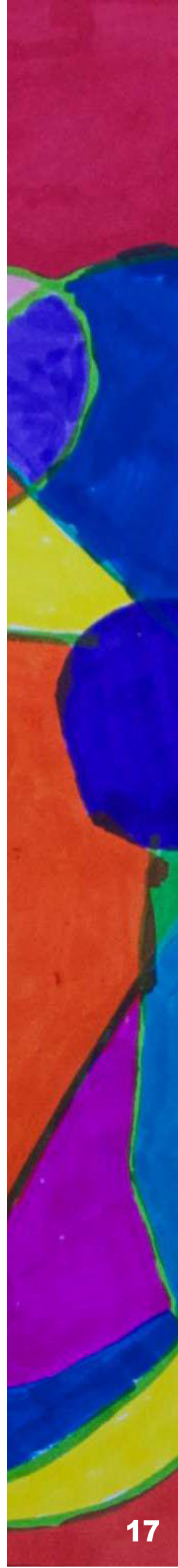
All potential risk factors likely to be encountered by individuals with disabilities in the workplace should be identified in advance and a work environment that is safe and accessible for everyone should be provided. Especially when preparing for emergencies such as fires and earthquakes, it is important to establish warning and evacuation systems meeting the needs of disabled employees.

For example:

- Visual warning systems (lighted signs and signals) to be provided for individuals who are hard-of-hearing,
- Audible guidance and information signs prepared in Braille to be provided for individuals with loss of vision,
- Accessible evacuation routes, ramps, and elevator arrangements to be provided for individuals with limited mobility.

Appropriate support should be provided to ensure that all employees can communicate effectively. Sign language training and accessible communication methods should be provided for hard-of-hearing employees. As for other disability groups, an inclusive and supportive work environment should be established with accessible digital tools, simplified contents, and ergonomic arrangements.

Job advertisements should not contain discriminatory language based on disability status; and a language that is open and inclusive of all types of disabilities should be used. Postings and ads should not contain and expressions excluding or limiting specific disability groups; instead, they should clearly and accessibly state the basic qualifications and skills required for the job. Thus, candidates are fairly evaluated based on their competencies and the requirements of the job, regardless of their disability status.



PSYCHOSOCIAL AND
NEUROLOGICAL
DIVERSITY

CHAPTER 5



PSYCHOSOCIAL AND NEUROLOGICAL DIVERSITY

Today, inclusive communication calls for a holistic approach embracing all areas of diversity, including cultural, ethnic, gender, psychosocial, and neurological diversities. This understanding recognizes that each individual's way of thinking, feeling, and engaging with the world is a natural part of the human experience.

The psychosocial and neurological diversity approach that stands out in this context addresses neurodevelopmental diversity such as autism, ADHD, and dyslexia, and psychosocial diversity such as depression, bipolar disorder, schizophrenia, and anxiety disorders, as a natural and meaningful part of the human experience. The movement stems from the advocacy for disability rights and human rights; and highlights the need not only for individuals to adapt to society, but also for society to evolve in line with the needs of individuals.

This understanding demands a careful design of language use, communication forms, and institutional policies in the workplace and educational settings as well as social life. It is not only an ethical responsibility, but also necessary for social cohesion to be cautious in communication to ensure that individuals feel understood, respected, and included, on the basis of all forms of diversities, including psychosocial and neurological diversity.

When viewed from this perspective, exclusionary discourse or discriminatory attitudes that are widespread in society not only threaten the psychological well-being of individuals, but also pose a problem threatening the human dignity and social peace. Therefore, inclusive communication should be adopted as a fundamental tool promoting equal participation and a sense of belonging for everyone.

WAYS TO SUPPORT INCLUSIVE COMMUNICATION IN PSYCHOSOCIAL AND NEUROLOGICAL DIVERSITY



Embodiment of Diversity in Communication

Bias-free acceptance of individuals' communication preferences allows them to feel understood and included. Respecting diversity instead of uniform norms strengthens the message that 'everyone's way of communication is valid'.



Individual Flexibility and Empowerment

Every individual's needs are different; personalized flexible approaches should be adopted instead of standardized uniform solutions, and safe spaces and support mechanisms should be offered.



Respectful and Accessible Work Environments

Accessible and inclusive environments designed with consideration for sensory sensitivities allow everyone to work productively.



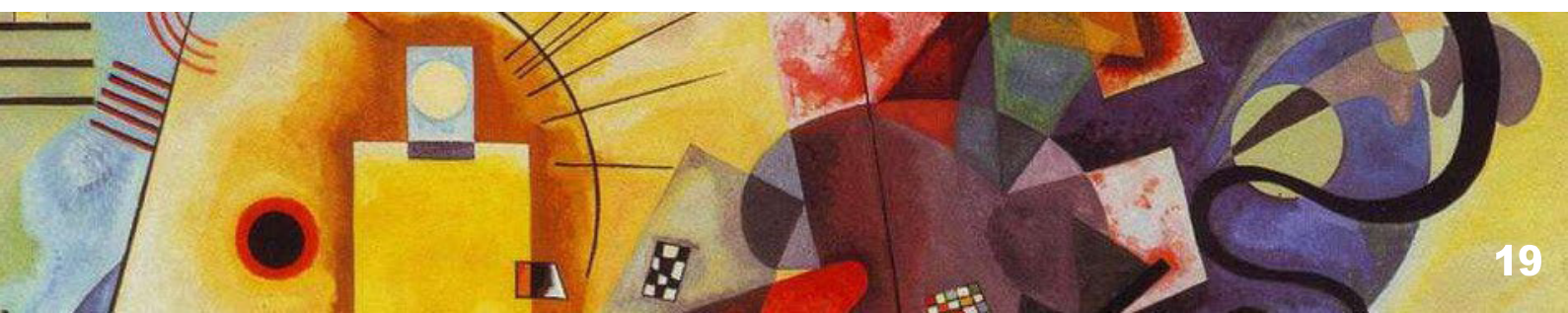
Raising Awareness and Continuous Learning

Trainings should be organized to eliminate social prejudices, and a continuous learning culture about psychosocial neurodiversity should be developed.



Avoiding Stigmatizing Definitions

Trainings should be organized to eliminate social prejudices, and a continuous learning culture about psychosocial neurodiversity should be developed.



PSYCHOSOCIAL AND NEUROLOGICAL DIVERSITY IN THE WORKPLACE

Inclusive Crisis Communication and Psychological Support

- The language used during and after crises needs to be sensitive to individuals' perceptual and communication styles; the sharing of information should be done in a clear, accessible, and reassuring manner. Psychological support processes should also be undertaken with this approach.

Inclusive Technology and Digital Accessibility

- Institutional digital systems should be regularly audited in terms of accessibility; and interfaces should be designed to be sensitive to psychosocial and neurological diversity.

Inclusive Feedback Culture

- Feedback processes should address performance as well as the individual's experiences and needs; and different formats for receiving and giving feedback should be supported.

What does Your Language say?



I don't always check to see whether visual elements such as font, colour and layout are appropriate.



I believe that verbal support is sufficient when conveying information.





WAYS TO SUPPORT PSYCHOSOCIAL AND NEUROLOGICAL DIVERSITY

Avoid using generalizing or restrictive expressions excluding individuals with neurodevelopmental profiles in speeches, written correspondences, and visual contents.

Provide face-to-face, written, and digital communication options; and allow employees to choose the method with which they feel most comfortable.

Create quiet areas, rest rooms, or work areas with low stimuli, paying attention to sensory sensitivities.

Use simple, straightforward, and visually-supported materials in meetings and information processes.

Plan psychosocial and neurological diversity and inclusive communication trainings intended for all employees.

ETHNICITY AND CULTURE

CHAPTER 6



ETHNICITY AND CULTURAL DIVERSITY

Türkiye is a rich geography that has historically been home to numerous ethnicities, cultural and linguistic communities living together. However, there are some groups that may face discrimination in social and institutional settings due to ethnicity, cultural differences, and migration-based circumstances. This constitutes a significant threat to social equality, justice, and harmony; hence, the use of inclusive and respectful language is of vital importance in mitigating such risks. This chapter provides principles and suggestions for language use based on sensitivity, inclusion, and respect when communicating with people of various ethnic origins and cultural identities in Türkiye.



Respecting Individuals' Identities and Preferences



Avoiding Generalizing and Stereotyping Expressions



Embracing Diversity of Identities in Different Dimensions



Standing Against Marginalization and Discrimination



Using Current and Accurate Terms & Expressions

SOCIAL IMPACTS OF DISCRIMINATORY LANGUAGE

Some expressions frequently used in society can unintentionally lay the groundwork for the spread of exclusionary and discriminatory language through generalizations based on individuals' ethnic origins, cultural backgrounds, or immigrant status. Such discourse not only reduces individuals' capabilities and values to their identities, but also perpetuates stereotypes, deepens social exclusion, and compromises the principle of social equality.

In particular, assumptions that a particular ethnic group is naturally more talented, reliable, or successful; the characterization of some communities as non-conforming, risky, or unacceptable groups; or the belief that critically important roles should only be assigned to certain identity groups, are all contrary to the principles of an inclusive society.

Similarly, considering all of these as a disadvantage, obstacle, or burden infringes on individuals' fundamental rights and dignity, resulting in isolation and increased social tension. Therefore, in communication, knowledge, skills, and contributions should be prioritized over people's identities; and the principles of respect and equality should be upheld.

Inclusive language and communication do not only improve interpersonal relationships, but also promote a culture of social peace, justice, and coexistence. Regardless of their identity, each individual should enjoy equal rights and respect; this understanding should be manifested in both our words and behaviours.

PREJUDICES

Prejudice

Drawback(s) in Communication

A white person should do this job.

Creates ethnicity-based privilege, and impairs equal opportunity.

People from that ethnic background are aggressive.

Stereotypes based on ethnicity, and fuels prejudice.

One of us should be given this position.

Implies discrimination and favouritism, and casts a dark shadow over merit.

They keep company with each other.

Creates social exclusion, and prevents an inclusive environment.

Immigrant problem

Defines immigrants as a "problem", and violates human rights.

What does Your Language say?



I usually provide similar cultural representations in my visuals.



I generally focus on the experiences of specific cultures in my contents.



SEXUAL ORIENTATION
AND GENDER
DIVERSITY

CHAPTER 7

SEXUAL ORIENTATION AND GENDER DIVERSITY

It is the foundation of social justice and human rights that individuals from all segments of society feel safe, respected, and valued. Sexual orientation and gender diversity also form an integral part of these rights.

An inclusive approach encourages individuals to freely express their identities, live their lives without facing discrimination, and participate equally in social life.

Sexual orientation refers to whom a person is romantically or sexually attracted to. It may include attractions to the opposite sex, the same sex, both sexes, non-binary, or no attraction to sex at all.

Inclusion is not limited to acknowledging the existence of individuals; it also entails recognizing their needs and rights. Inclusive language and attitudes, especially in workplaces, have a positive effect on employees' productivity, loyalty, and psychological well-being. Anxiety increases and the sense of belonging decreases among individuals who are forced to hide their identity, and this brings about negative consequences at both the individual and organizational levels.

What does Your Language say?



I only include "Female" and "Male" options on forms.



I use expressions defining heterosexuality as 'normal' or 'natural'.



INCLUSIVE LANGUAGE AND PRACTICES BASED ON GENDER AND SEXUAL ORIENTATION



Titles emphasizing gender, such as "Bayan (Ms.)", "bay (Mr.)", "hanımefendi (Ma'am)", "beyefendi (Sir)", etc.



Forms containing only "female" and "male" options.



Using directly names instead of specifying gender in titles.



Not limiting forms to only "female" and "male" options; providing all gender identity expressions, and adding options such as "I don't wish to specify" and "...", etc.



Representation merely based on heterosexual and binary gender patterns in all visual and written contents.



Expressions promoting a particular sexual orientation with expressions such as "Normal", "natural", etc.



Using elements reflecting all sexual orientations, gender identities, and cultural and physical diversity in visual and written contents.



Human identity and orientation are diverse; no orientation or identity can be privileged as 'normal' or 'natural'.

THE IMPORTANCE OF INCLUSIVE COMMUNICATION AND PRACTICES

Inclusive communication and practices allow individuals to freely express their identities and foster their psychosocial well-being. Sexual orientation discrimination may raise the risk of anxiety, stress, and depression in individuals; create social exclusion and a lack of belonging; thus, adversely affecting professional and academic performance. The adoption of an inclusive language and attitudes in all social areas, such as workplaces, education, and healthcare, bolsters a sense of belonging, and promotes productivity, loyalty, and life satisfaction. Therefore, inclusive communication is not just an ethical responsibility, and constitutes the basis for sustainable social and economic development.

Elements reflecting sexual orientation and gender diversity should be included in all visual, video, and written contents. This approach renders inclusivity visible; thus, ensuring that individuals feel accepted and valued.

Policies

Clear policies preventing discrimination and fostering inclusion should be developed, and all individuals should be provided with equal access to these essential services. Awareness should be raised regarding the rights and needs of individuals with diverse identities by providing inclusion trainings to employees.

Safe and supportive environments should be created, allowing individuals to freely exist without being forced to hide their identities. Anti-discriminatory and sensitive approaches should be embraced in psychological support services, considering sexual orientation and gender identity.

Creating a Safe Environment

INCLUSIVE AND SAFE COMMUNICATION PRINCIPLES

Mails

Avoid using gender-specific titles (Mr., Mrs., Ms., Sir). Address people by their first and last names.
Feel free to ask the person when you are unsure about the pronoun to be used. Prefer gender-neutral titles "Sayın/Sevgili" (Dear) used in Turkish.

Conversations

Inclusive communication calls for unconditional respect for people's identities and expressions. Assumptions about personal areas such as marital status, parenthood, etc. may unintentionally create exclusionary effects; therefore, it is essential to avoid such approaches.

Visuals & Representation

Make room for diversity reflecting all identities and characteristics in visual contents. Avoid representations perpetuating female-male roles, power relations, and gender stereotypes. Consider the use of gender symbols or inclusive icons in visuals.

Social Media

Make sure that every identity, perspective, and experience are made visible in social media contents. Respect how individuals would like to be represented in the digital environment. Remove comments containing hatred or discriminatory expressions, thus, creating a safe and inclusive communication environment.

SOCIOECONOMIC
STATUS

CHAPTER 8



SOCIOECONOMIC STATUS

Socioeconomic status is a concept comprising multidimensional factors such as individuals' income levels, education levels, occupational positions, and perceived social classes. This has a direct impact not only on an individual's quality of life, but also on fundamental areas of life such as access to healthcare services, housing conditions, educational opportunities, and participation in the workforce.

When it comes to workplace diversity, we usually think of more visible identities such as gender, age, ethnic origin, etc. However, another dimension is often overlooked: socioeconomic diversity.

People's social and economic backgrounds significantly affect their workplace experiences, access to opportunities, and even the way they express themselves.

Terms to Avoid	Why to Avoid?	Suggested Inclusive Alternative
Lower-class people, poor people	Defines a person by their income level; limits their identity with an economic label	Individuals with economic difficulty
Needy	Assigns a passive position; strips the individual from their capacity as the subject.	Individuals in need of support mechanisms.
People with troubled pasts	Depicts the person as responsible for their circumstances; stigmatizing.	Individuals with difficult life experiences
Uneducated	Implies deficiency; the system should be held responsible, not the individual.	Individuals with limited access to educational opportunities
Unemployed	Defines as a permanent identity; eliminates temporary nature of the process.	Individuals seeking a job

SOCIOECONOMIC DIVERSITY AND CLASS BIAS

Socioeconomic diversity is not just limited with income level; it also covers individuals' life culture, communication style, accent, behavioural patterns, and appearance. Diversities in clothing, speech or expressions are simply natural reflections of people's past experiences and living conditions.

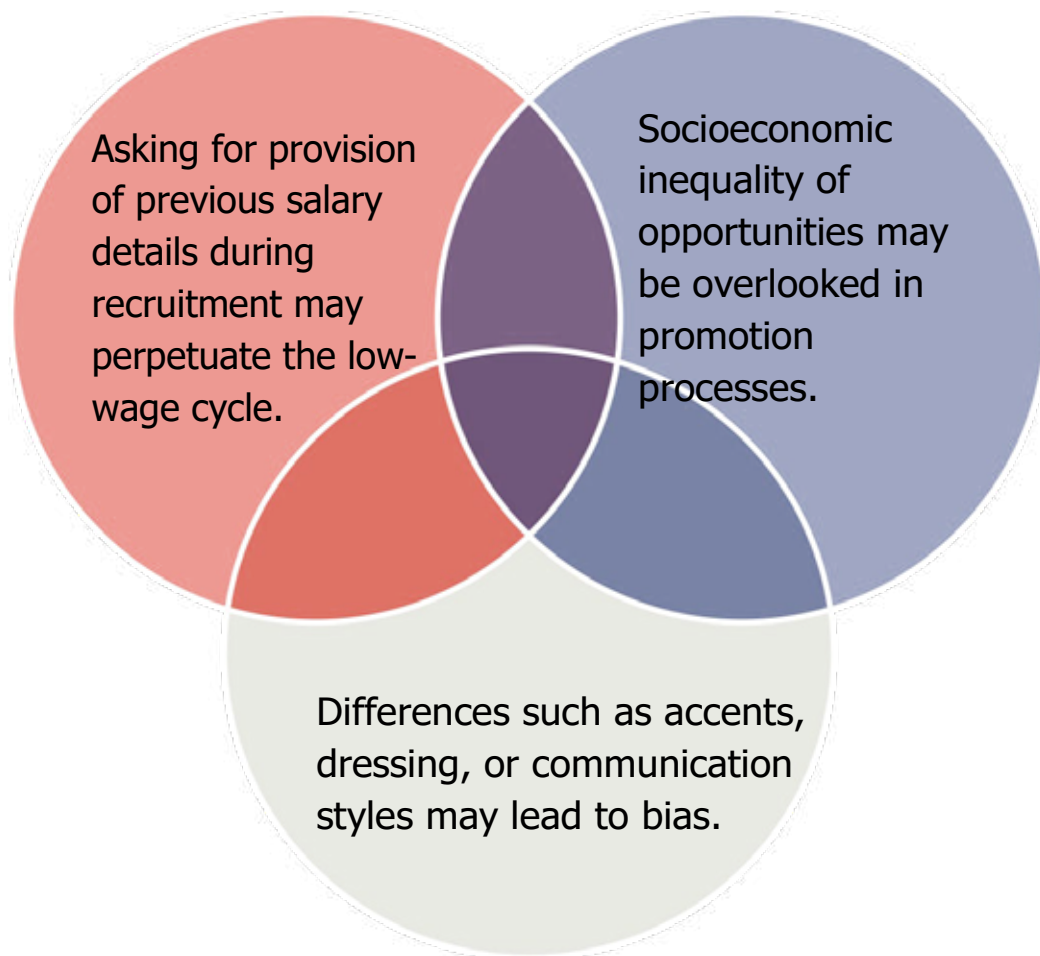
However, this diversity may be obscured by expressions hierarchically categorizing individuals based on their socioeconomic backgrounds, speech patterns, or lifestyles. Such definitions reduce one's value to their circumstances; however, every individual is a whole, completely defined by their entire life story.

Like ethnic origin, gender, or age, socioeconomic background also constitutes a part of a person's identity. The recognition of this fact is at the heart of an inclusive work culture where people are judged not only by the opportunities they started with, but by the effort, experience, and contributions that they have put in.

Some employees may feel pressure to hide clues to their social background or comply with prevailing norms. Softening your accent, transforming your appearance, or hiding your behaviours may lead to the loss of the sense of belonging and create internal exhaustion over time. Therefore, inclusive institutions build safe spaces encouraging people to express themselves as they are, rather than their origins.



SOCIOECONOMIC DIVERSITY AND CLASS BIAS



STEP-BY-STEP INCLUSION IN SOCIOECONOMIC DIVERSITY

Workplaces should embrace fair and equitable approaches in their recruitment, remuneration, and career development processes in order to enhance socioeconomic diversity and to foster an inclusive workforce. In this context, rather than focusing merely on specific university, it is also essential to reach out to different talent sources such as local communities, vocational high schools, and apprenticeship programmes.

Going beyond expectations of cultural conformity, a perspective supporting diversity should be adopted; and remuneration should be transparent and fair, not based on previous salaries, but rather on the competencies required for the position. Potential should be unleashed by offering free training, certification, and mentoring opportunities to disadvantaged groups.

Offering early-career employees financial support and development opportunities mitigates socioeconomic barriers. These approaches cultivate a fair work environment based on talent and potential, rather than privileges. Research evidence suggests that such inclusive practices contribute to a more diverse, robust, and sustainable workforce.

What does Your Language say?

I evaluate candidates based on their university names during recruitment.

Factors such as accent, clothing or communication style may sometimes affect my perception.



RELIGIOUS IDENTITIES

CHAPTER 9

RELIGIOUS IDENTITIES

Many people in Türkiye seemingly share similar beliefs; but in fact, there is a wide variety of religious beliefs, denominations and lifestyles coexisting in the country. This diversity also manifests itself in workplaces, as with all areas of society. However, this diversity is mostly not noticed or is avoided. Nevertheless, a person's faith or lack of faith constitutes an important part of their identity, and it is very important for employees to be respected at work and to be able to freely express themselves, both in terms of motivation, and their commitment to the organization.

However, while some employees fear being excluded or misunderstood when they clearly express their beliefs, others might prefer to remain silent as they do not belong to the majority. This also creates an invisible inequality in the workplace. Therefore, every organization should prioritize creating a work environment where employees can feel themselves safe and valued.

To establish such an environment, it is imperative to first recognize the presence of individuals of all faiths, and accept and respect this diversity. An inclusive approach aims to create an organizational structure equally valuing all employees, not just specific groups, and allowing everyone to be themselves without having to hide their identity. Achieving this requires taking more sensitive and inclusive steps in any and all areas, from daily communications to meeting practices, celebration styles, and institutional policies. These apparently small steps help employees express themselves more comfortably, develop a sense of belonging in the workplace, and trust their organization.





INCLUSIVE PRACTICES FOR RELIGIOUS IDENTITIES IN THE WORKPLACE

Inclusive management of religious diversity in the workplace not only makes employees feel valued, but also fosters the organizational culture. Basic steps to support this process are provided below.

Creating Awareness

Organize training programs for employees on religious diversity and inclusion, and provide information on various religious holidays and cultural backgrounds in internal communications of the organization.

In the workplace, use inclusive language free from prejudice and discrimination, allowing all religious identities to feel included. Avoid statements targeting specific religious belief groups.

Using Inclusive Language

Flexibility for Special Days

Ensure that employees can take time off for religious holidays and special days. Support diversity by offering flexible and fair vacation opportunities meeting the needs of employees with different religious beliefs, through implementation of a floating holiday system.

Safe environments allowing employees to comfortably share issues arising from religious reasons foster their sense of belonging and contributes to the establishment of a more positive work culture.

Providing Open and Safe Communication Channels

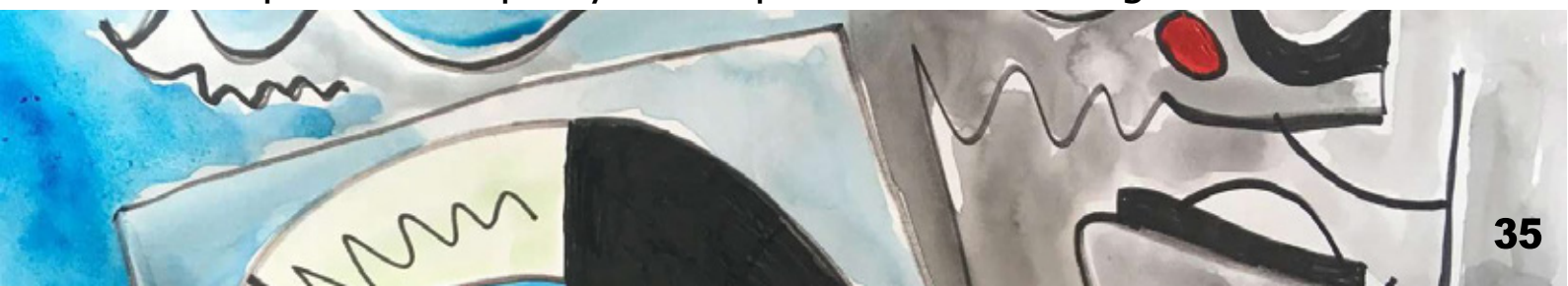
CONSCIOUS ATTITUDE AGAINST DISCRIMINATION AND MICROAGGRESSIONS

Discrimination against religious identities in the workplace may often manifest itself not in a clear and direct way, but in finer and more hidden ways. Such behaviours are called microaggressions; for example, repeatedly offering food to a fasting employee, whether deliberately or unintentionally, directing questions questioning the personal beliefs of an employee wearing a headscarf, or excluding employees wearing religious symbols on them are instances of microaggressions.

In the article titled "Recognizing and Responding to Microaggressions at Work" published in Harvard Business Review (2022), it is emphasized that microaggressions damage the psychological safety of employees; and adversely affect learning, problem-solving, motivation, and emotional well-being. In addition, it is stated that employee engagement and collaboration may become compromised if such behaviours are not responded to with a systematic and proactive approach.

Measures to be taken:

- Establish clear anti-discrimination policies within the organization and communicate them to all employees. These policies must also cover microaggressions.
- Prepare guidelines on what microaggressions are and how to deal with them and make such guides available for access by employees.
- Establish safe and accessible mechanisms for religious discrimination and microaggression complaints; and thus, ensure that employees feel themselves safe and secure.
- Provide religious diversity and sensitivity training to managers. Support an inclusive environment by using real examples and empathy techniques in such trainings.



UNDESIRABLE COMMUNICATION STYLES TO AVOID

Avoid	Description
Broad generalizations and assumptions about beliefs: "Everyone celebrates this holiday."	Assumes all individuals share the same belief system; renders various beliefs or lack of belief invisible.
Expectation of mandatory participation "Everyone should participate in the event."	Emphasize that participation is voluntary. Example: "We welcome everyone willing to participate."
Interrogative approach to religious identity and practices: "Why don't you celebrate New Year?"	Everyone is not required to celebrate everything.
Faith-based humour or sarcastic expressions "Jokes made with religious symbols."	Consider sensitivities regarding beliefs; make sure that humour does not exclude anybody.

What does Your Language say?



Do my expressions sometimes give the impression that everyone shares my beliefs?

☐
☐

Do I exhibit an open attitude towards learning about religious rituals?

☐
☐

INCLUSION AWARENESS
MEASUREMENT

CHAPTER 10

What does Your Language say?

Inclusion Awareness Measurement

Scoring System:

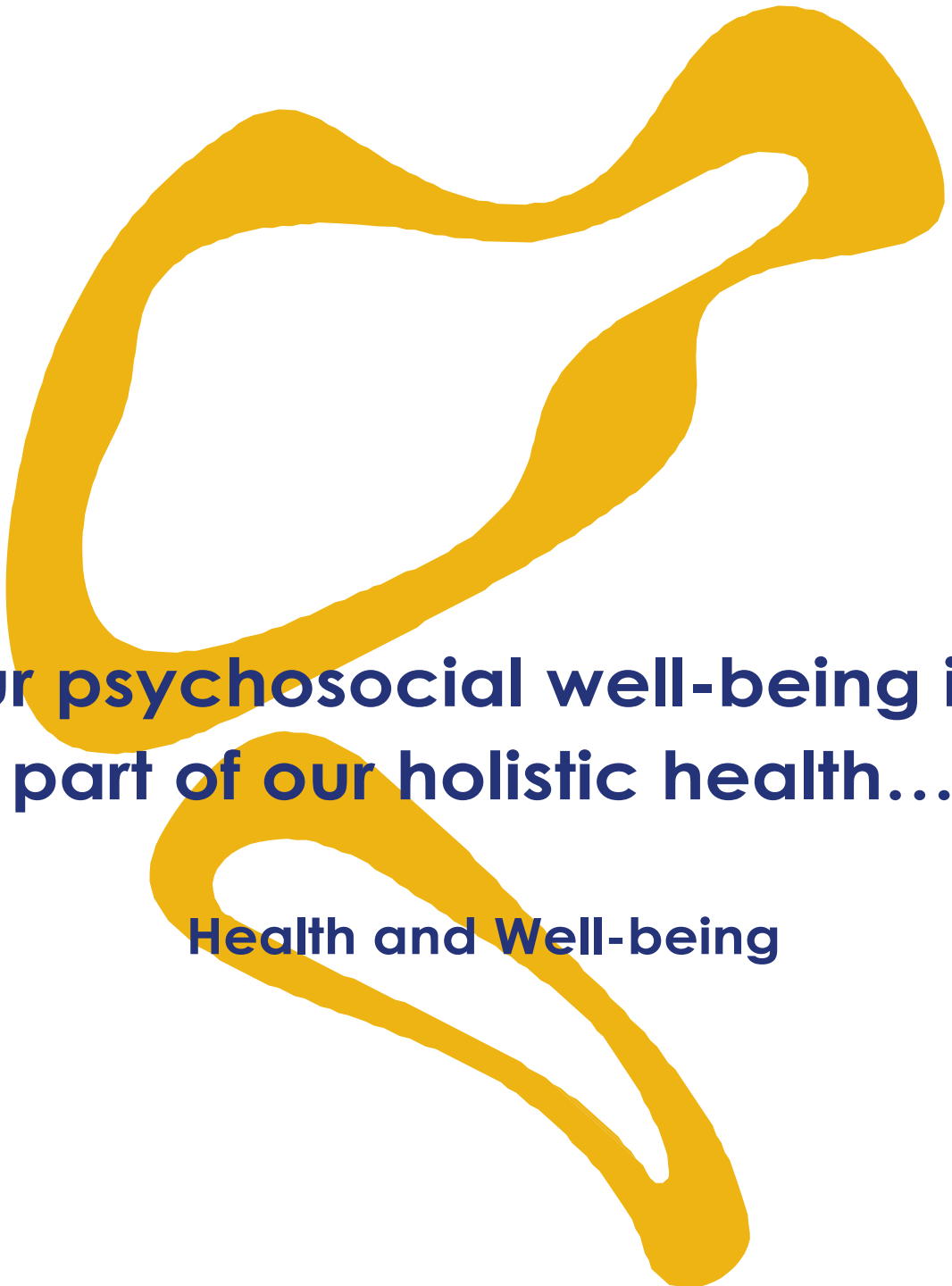
In this evaluation form, each question answered with "Yes" is scored as 1 point while each question answered with "No" is scored as 0 points.

However, in this system, the lower the score, the higher the awareness about inclusive communication.

Your Total Score	Description
0-5	You are highly aware of inclusive communication and conscious of differences in your language and behaviours
6-10	You have basic awareness about inclusive communication and are open to improvement. Review your daily communications.
11-16	You need to improve your awareness regarding inclusive communication. This guide can help you.

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**Our psychosocial well-being is a
part of our holistic health...**

Health and Well-being