

# *The Power of Belonging*

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How leaders build truly inclusive cultures



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# Belonging is a human need

As humans, we all crave a sense of belonging. It is a fundamental human need that motivates our behavior. Psychologist Abraham Maslow recognized this when he placed “belonging” in the third tier of his hierarchy of human needs, right after our physical needs (e.g., air, water, food and shelter) and our needs for safety and security.



“The needs for **safety, belonging, love** relations and for **respect** can be satisfied only by other people, i.e., only from outside the person.”

— Abraham Maslow

## But what exactly is “belonging”?

According to Cornell University, belonging is “the feeling of security and support when there is a sense of acceptance, inclusion, and identity for a member of a certain group.”

We feel a sense of belonging when we feel connected to others, and when we feel our presence and contributions are valued. Belonging is a powerful force, in that it enables us to feel confident showing up as our authentic selves while empowering us to access our full range of skills, abilities and potential.

# Belonging impacts everything

## The Crisis of Belonging

The Great Resignation has shown us that many workers in the U.S. have felt or feel isolated at work (80%) and that they don't belong (51%) — with an estimated 40% considering leaving their current job.<sup>1</sup>

This crisis of belonging in the workplace is costing companies millions in lost productivity, lower performance and low morale. And it's especially painful for CEOs and leaders who have made bold commitments to hiring diverse talent, only to discover it's the workplace culture that determines if they stay and thrive.

And this isn't just a workplace issue. America is in the midst of a crisis of disconnection. Today, we see U.S. culture torn by conflicts over reproductive rights, sexual orientation, mental illness, health care and more. The trend toward dehumanization is causing people to lose their sense of shared humanity. It's no surprise that more than 61% of Americans feel lonely.<sup>2</sup>

In order to heal, move forward, and create better communities where every person feels like they belong, we need to first understand the power of belonging.

“The power of community to create health is far greater than any physician, clinic or hospital.”

— Mark Hyman

## The Value of Belonging

Inclusion and belonging are what make diversity truly powerful. Authors Liz Fosslien and Mollie West Duffy explain: “Diversity is having a seat at the table, inclusion is having a voice, and belonging is having that voice be heard.”

The power of belonging is seen in a large number of studies showing the transformative potential of positive social connections and a sense of belonging. For example people:

- Get sick less often
- Recover twice as fast from surgery
- Experience less depression
- Learn things faster
- Remember things longer
- Tolerate pain and discomfort better
- Display more mental acuity
- Perform better at their job

High belonging was even linked to a whopping 56% increase in job performance, a 50% drop in turnover risk, and a 75% reduction in sick days. All of these improvements made from investing in belonging add up to a yearly savings of \$5,200 per employee.<sup>3</sup>

These savings associated with a high sense of belonging are remarkable, showing how integral it is not just to the human experience, but to a sustainable and thriving business as well.

<sup>1</sup> Smet, Aaron De, Bonnie Dowling, Bryan Hancock, and Bill Schaninger. “The Great Attrition Is Making Hiring Harder. Are You Searching the Right Talent Pools?” McKinsey & Company.

<sup>2</sup> Renken, Elena. “Most Americans Are Lonely, and Our Workplace Culture May Not Be Helping.” NPR.

<sup>3</sup> Johnson, Whitney, Dawn Klinghoffer, and Melissa Daimler. “The Value of Belonging at Work.” Harvard Business Review.



# Feelings Matter

In every aspect of our lives, including the workplace, we desire feeling valued, safe and supported. When we feel accepted and included we are able to bring our whole selves to work, making us more engaged and productive.

In creating a culture of belonging, it's not enough to simply give everyone a seat at the table. It's imperative to include and amplify historically excluded and underrepresented voices, remove barriers and value each other for our unique experiences and perspectives. Businesses and organizations first need to appreciate that employees are more than resources. They're human beings with worries and struggles — people with a yearning for the support of their peers in navigating life's challenges and triumphs.

A feeling of belonging at work strongly correlates to higher levels of engagement — such as increased collaboration, problem solving and better decision-making.<sup>1</sup> Research by Deloitte<sup>2</sup> found there are three core drivers that create a sense of belonging in the workplace:



## Comfort

A work environment where employees are treated fairly and can bring their authentic selves to work



## Connection

Having a sense of community and identifying as a defined team



## Contribution

Feeling aligned with the organization's purpose, mission and values and being valued for their individual contributions

Of these three 'Cs', contribution was found to be the biggest driver of belonging in the workplace, which in turn fostered higher levels of comfort and connection.



# Empathy leads to Innovation

Empathy is another factor that's been identified as essential to fostering belonging. For instance, one study reveals that people who reported their leaders were empathetic were 61% more likely to be innovative.<sup>1</sup>

Empathy helps build trust, gain respect and strengthen relationships — all of which contribute to a high sense of belonging.

Only when individuals feel like they belong are they able to confidently speak up, actively participate and fully contribute.

A sense of belonging is what unlocks the power of diversity in the workplace, though it hasn't always been easy to cultivate.

“It is critical for employers to understand: we will not know what employees can bring to the table if we do not allow them to be their authentic selves.”

— Victor Terry

Chief Diversity Officer, State Farm



# Unlock Belonging through Shared Dialogue



Awareness

Understanding

Commitment

Action

## Move from Awareness to Action

DEI education is important, but research has shown that training alone doesn't create belonging. What really works is shared dialogue. According to the World Economic Forum, "shared dialogue is one of the most effective tools we have for fostering belonging."

One reason for this is that traditional training, or one-way monologue, doesn't target the emotional area of the brain where behavior change occurs. While most trainings appeal to the limbic system, the part of our brains that are great at grasping concepts, conversations appeal to the emotional side of the brain where behavior is managed and regulated.

If you're ready to build belonging, Inclusivv has helped global brands, top universities, and world-changing NGOs and nonprofits nurture and sustain a culture of belonging by allowing everyone to feel heard and giving everyone a role to play.

## The Value of Shared Dialogue

Shared dialogue has proven to move the needle on belonging, by allowing everyone to feel heard and valued, learn new perspectives, and connect with others.

Facilitating meaningful conversations results in happier, more engaged and more productive employees. Meaningful discussions have similar effects on the community level, leading to more empowered, engaged and active constituents.

## Inclusivv Conversations Build Belonging

Inclusivv conversations create space for connection across differences, bridging the gap between awareness and action. Inclusivv's approach is award-winning and combines community organizing principles with the power of storytelling and behavior-change theory in a way that creates real and lasting impact.



Conversation  
Host



Small Group  
Gathering



Structured  
Conversation



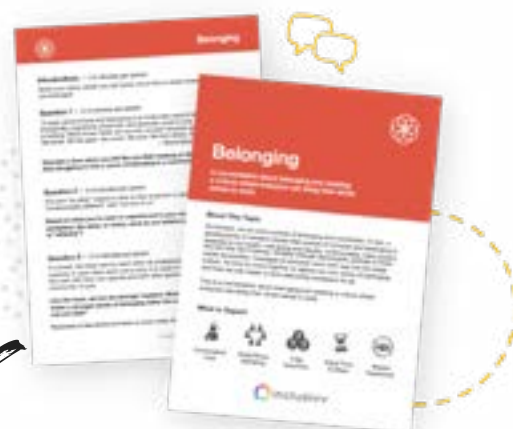
Equal Time  
to Share



One Shared  
Experience



# Experience the Power of Belonging



Engage your entire team in a conversation about belonging.

## The Online Inclusivv Hosted Experience

*What you get:*

- A transformative 90-minute online event
- Up to 300 participants and 50 breakout rooms
- An expert host to facilitate your conversation
- A custom registration page
- Communications to encourage participation
- Pre-conversation learning resources
- Post-conversation actions, survey and resources

## The Self-Guided Conversation Package

*What you get:*

- A host guide with prompts and questions
- License to host unlimited conversations for 1 year
- Access to host training for 2 people
- A complete content package
- Communications to encourage participation
- Pre-conversation learning resources
- Post-conversation actions, survey and resources

## The In-Person Inclusivv Hosted Experience

*What you get:*

- A transformative 60/90-minute inperson event
- Up to 300 participants around small tables
- An expert host to facilitate your conversation
- A custom registration page
- Communications to encourage participation
- Pre-conversation learning resources
- Post-conversation actions and resources



Reserve your date and time at [inclusivv.co/belonging](https://inclusivv.co/belonging)  
Or [schedule a call](#) with a member of the Inclusivv team



# Ignite change through conversation

Inclusivv is a community-building platform that brings people together for conversations that matter.

We believe that the key to an inclusive society lies in peer-to-peer conversations. When we share our stories with one another, we open ourselves to deeper connection and greater empathy. And by allowing every voice to be heard, we build bridges across racial, political and gender divides.

Shared dialogue is the fundamental tool for creating inclusion. It's a proven method for building belonging, increasing psychological safety and creating a more productive work environment.

Inclusivv makes it easy to scale conversations so that everyone can participate, either online or in person.

With Inclusivv, you have access to over 50 topics, ranging from Belonging, to Mental Health, to Inclusivv Leadership. Our platform makes it easy to manage follow-up, track engagement and gather meaningful insights and actions.

Combining the power of microlearning, peer discussions, reflection and action steps, Inclusivv helps organizations and participants:

- Build community across differences
- Hear new ideas and diverse perspectives
- Share and listen to authentic stories with empathy
- Build peer understanding and team culture
- Apply what they learn to their life and work

Measurable impact:

- 79% strongly agree they learned new ideas and perspectives
- 93% strongly agree they felt heard and valued for their perspectives
- 86% strongly agree they felt more connected to others



Core programs and solutions:

## Membership

A curated monthly program of community conversations hosted by Inclusivv.

## Private Conversations

Conversation experiences hosted by Inclusivv in person or online.

## Private Community

Customize the Inclusivv platform and scale conversations within your own community by leveraging the content library of 50+ topics, host coaching, actions, reflections, data and insights.



It's time to be  
Inclusivv.

[Schedule a free consultation](#)  
or contact [hello@inclusivv.co](mailto:hello@inclusivv.co)

# The Inclusion & Belonging Journey

Looking for a DEI program that's all put together and ready for rollout to your whole team? Our Inclusivv Membership is designed to make it as easy for you to give everyone a seat at the table.

Our Inclusion and Belonging Journey is a curated monthly program of courageous conversations, designed to deepen understanding around important topics, develop emotional intelligence, and inspire meaningful behavior change. Join our public membership, or create your own private journey by selecting topics from our library of over 50 topics.



The Inclusivv Membership delivers a shared learning journey of community conversations, learning resources and suggested actions for deeper engagement.

- 9.5 out of 10 recommend this learning experience
- 93% felt heard and valued for their perspectives
- 79% learned new ideas and perspectives
- 86% felt more connected to others

[Schedule a demo to get a special offer](#)

“ It was so impactful to have these conversations across different organizations. New perspectives helped conversation flow freely and expanded my mind. ”

Victoria Mayo  
Culture & Inclusion Program Manager  
FormLabs