

INCLUSIVITY TIP OF THE MONTH

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Let's face it: in diverse workplaces, there's a greater risk for misunderstandings, misstatements (aka micro-aggressions) or hurt feelings between colleagues who themselves are diverse. This is in part because everyone brings to the workplace different perspectives and experiences, some of which may be rooted in historical and personal trauma. It's inevitable that someone will say or do something that will adversely impact a co-worker; ordinarily this is a problem but when the subject matter of the offending action is tied to one's identity as a diverse person, things get even more complicated.

From an HR (or even a simple humanist) perspective, it's important that the offending work colleague apologize for the statement or slight. As important, the team member who's been offended or slighted needs to forgive the offender. A team member who harbors animosity toward a past offender often is less productive and a potential agent to degrade morale, particularly among other diverse team members.

Here are some quick tips about how to foster forgiveness in a diverse workplace:

1. Talk about and frequently reinforce that forgiveness is a workplace or organizational value.
2. Ensure that you, as a workplace leader, practice what you preach by forgiving team members who have offended you.
3. In the instance of another team member who's been offended and once an apology has been made, talk about the need for forgiveness; then set the expectation that the offended team member will work toward forgiving the transgressor.
4. Check-in with the offended team member to determine where they are relative to forgiveness; if they're finding it difficult to forgive the offender, provide resources on the power of forgiveness. (One such resource is the [REACH model](#) created by Everett L. Worthington, which he developed after a horrific crime was committed upon a family member.)
5. If the offended team member still can't forgive, get help—bring in a professional/therapist who can add an element of objectivity to the situation.
6. Conduct workplace training on the power of apologizing and forgiving. Everett Worthington reports that an eight-hour forgiveness workshop can reduce subjects' depression and anxiety levels as much as several months of psychotherapy would.

Some of the above points can be found in ["The Power of Forgiveness at Work"](#) by Brooke Deterline.

In short, forgiveness needs to be a key personal value for anyone. It's not always easy to forgive but doing so allows one the freedom to move on and grow as a person.