

CONSCIOUSLY UNBIASED™

It took me until midlife to ask my own parents this question: "Can I have permission to be honest?"

As a first-generation American with Indian immigrant parents who straddled between American and Indian culture, I had the freedom to pick and choose from both cultures, identities, and communities; but with that also came the isolating reminder that I didn't totally belong in either.

My younger self, that little boy who just wanted to belong, thought belonging was fitting in. I tried to belong by adapting the way I spoke or acted or played to more closely match the people around me. I often let others' dominant worldview dictate how I showed up, rather than being honest about what I wanted. It was the path of least resistance.

Later in life I discovered that being honest about who I was—such as not following the Hindu religion or admitting that I didn't want children to my very traditional Indian parents—initially created friction, but eventually led to more connection. It allowed my family to better see me for who I truly am.

The problem is if we don't share what's in our hearts and minds from a place of good intention (I'm not talking about making blatantly hurtful remarks or contributing to cancel culture); we aren't able to be fully ourselves. We aren't able to move towards each other and do the work necessary in order to grow. And we must create the space for others to do the same.

I now know that true belonging, in our workplaces, in our communities, and in our world, is NOT about fitting it, but about being able to stand out. Belonging is about being able to bring your whole self to the table, without having to adapt to the status quo. Belonging is about being accepted for our differences. Belonging is about celebrating our unique perspectives and recognizing the value that our differences bring.

A key to overcoming bias is to share ourselves, and to allow others to share, even if the message isn't phrased perfectly. It will be awkward. It will be uncomfortable. You will make mistakes. But I believe it's the way forward.

In our increasingly polarized environment—fueled by a pandemic, social unrest and the upcoming elections—people are afraid to say or do the wrong thing when it comes to [addressing issues such as equity](#) and anti-racism. However, this lack of honest communication only creates more distance and misunderstanding.

Let's work on removing judgements of ourselves and others that leads to fear and hate. That means fully accepting ourselves in order to be able to fully accept others. How can you give yourself—or someone close to you—the permission to be honest today?

Ashish Kaushal, founder of Consciously Unbiased

Honest Conversations

Let's Talk About Privilege
Featuring: Janice Gassam, Ph.D., Author of *Dirty Diversity*; Drew Train, Co-Founder & President, OBERLAND; Davianne Harris, Partner and Head of Strategy, OBERLAND; Derek Walker Owner, Brown & Browner Advertising
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PRIDE: Stories of Belonging
Featuring: Dawn McCartney, VP of CWS Council at SIA; Mark Reyna, Exp. Associate, People & Organization at PwC; John Dyer, Non-Employee Talent Retention and Acquisition Expert; Dimitri Joseph Moise, Co-founder of Claim Our Space; Annie Brown, Professional Trainer
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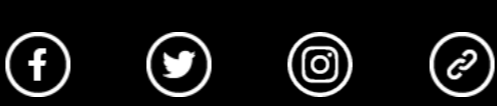
How To Support Black People In The Workplace
Featuring: Akilah Cadet, Founder, Change Cadet; Carly Cushnie, CEO, Cushnie; Egwu Nwankpah, VP, Supplier Diversity and Development, Bank of America; Nicole Revanales, VP, Executive Recruiter, M&T Bank; Shirley Johnson, LMFT
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