



Now More Than Ever: Why Leadership on Diversity and Inclusion Requires Emotional Intelligence

Challenges for Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) Leaders

1. ***Leaders on DEI efforts can always expect pushback on those efforts.*** The pushback may be overt or very subtle. It may come from those who are openly hostile or from those who appear to “get it.” But pushback happens because effective DEI efforts challenge the status quo, and it can feel threatening to many when we start to change “the ways things have always been.” ***Leaders on diversity, equity, and inclusion must expect and manage this pushback.***
2. ***Leaders on DEI efforts must remain aware of their own social location and privilege, noticing not just what we do but how we do it.*** We need to be transparent about our goals and our methods while also being savvy about how power and privilege are playing out around us. It’s ok to use our privilege to advance a social justice agenda, as long as we’re intentional and careful about it. ***Leaders on DEI efforts must expect to be held accountable for their words and actions; they must abide by the highest ethical standards.***
3. ***Leaders on DEI efforts can face personal attacks and often have their motives and methods challenged – from many sides. Leaders may face personal criticism and lack of support from those with privilege – colleagues who do not want things to change.***

Leaders may also face direct and indirect criticism and challenges from members of marginalized communities. These challenges and criticisms can be especially painful when we are working so hard to effect change. Leaders on DEI efforts need to remember they are working with people and communities who have had their material and spiritual resources stolen or used; people and institutions who have no reason to trust that things might now be different. This kind of historical, institutional, and personal trauma can make working relationships particularly challenging. ***Leaders on DEI efforts do best when they prioritize compassion, self-awareness, respect and inclusivity, personal boundaries, an understanding that this is lifelong work, and a focus on their vision for justice.***

4. ***Leaders on DEI efforts have made peace with the fact that things will always move too slow; there will never be enough resources; and exclusion, bias, and injustice are too often the norm.*** This leader has to hold out the hope and promise for a more equitable and just society, even when many others are feeling hurt, traumatized, and hopeless.

A leader on DEI efforts can feel hurt, disillusioned and hopeless, but shares it appropriately (e.g., with close friends privately). ***This leader knows how crucial it is that they hold the vision for others, reminding them of all the work that has gone before, all the sacrifice people have made to change unjust systems, and how people working together CAN create lasting change.***

5. ***This leader knows that every single person is critical to this work – no one is ever expendable.***