
CREATING A CULTURE OF BELONGING

SEPTEMBER 2023

Deborah Jeffries, SHRM-CP, PHR, CPC
HR Answers, Inc.
Vice President
djeffries@hranswers.com
www.hranswers.com
503-885-9815



TODAY'S AGENDA



Define a Sense of Belonging



Purpose/Value of Belonging in the Workplace



Discussion Time – Actionable Strategies



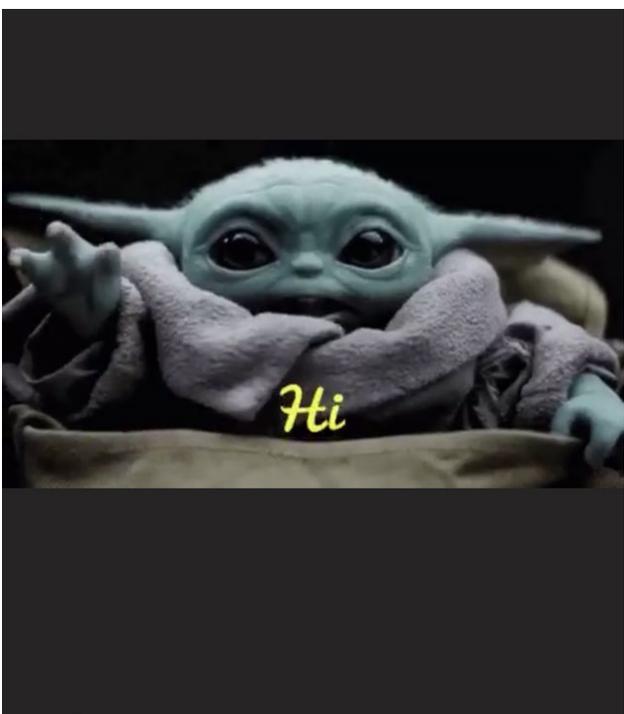
Tips and Ideas for You/Organization

ACTIVITY

Cluster with your fellow attendees please find 3 uncommon things that you have in common.

Be sure to list them.





Deborah Jeffries, *SHRM-CP, PHR, CPC*

Vice President

30+ years with HRA

djeffries@hranswers.com

<https://www.linkedin.com/in/deborahjeffries/>

<https://twitter.com/frappegirl>

HOW MANY CULTURES ARE YOU A MEMBER OF?

- Culture = Community that is distinct in beliefs and behaviors
- Member – Accepted as such by yourself and others

Profession

Religion

Education

Gender

Industry

Ethnic Group

Sports

Country



“Culture results from the messages we receive about "what is really valued around here and what is not.”

Culture manifests through values, beliefs, and activity guided through shared assumptions and group norms. It consists of your view of the world and what you know, motivations and assumptions, mindsets and behaviors, stories and legends shared, rituals practiced, the symbols you identify with, and your emotional and physical environments.

'CULTURE' MESSAGES COME FROM THREE SOURCES:

- Behavior:
 - walk the talk of leaders and influencers
 - meetings and emails
- Systems
 - performance reviews and rewards
 - planning, budgeting, training
- Symbols
 - allocation of time and money
 - promotions and exits
 - stories and rituals





Inclusion & Belonging are an ongoing practice—not training events

Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Belonging efforts should be designed to maximize joy and connection, and minimize fear

DEFINITION

- A feeling of security and support that results when there is a sense of acceptance, inclusion, an identification for members of a certain group.
- Workplace belonging refers to feelings of being accepted, cared about, included, thought of, and valued by those around you at work.
- Note: 40% of people say they feel isolated at work regardless of identity.



ACTIVITY

Think about a time when you experienced a sense of belonging in a group. How did you know you belonged?



WORDS WE CHOOSE FOR BELONGING

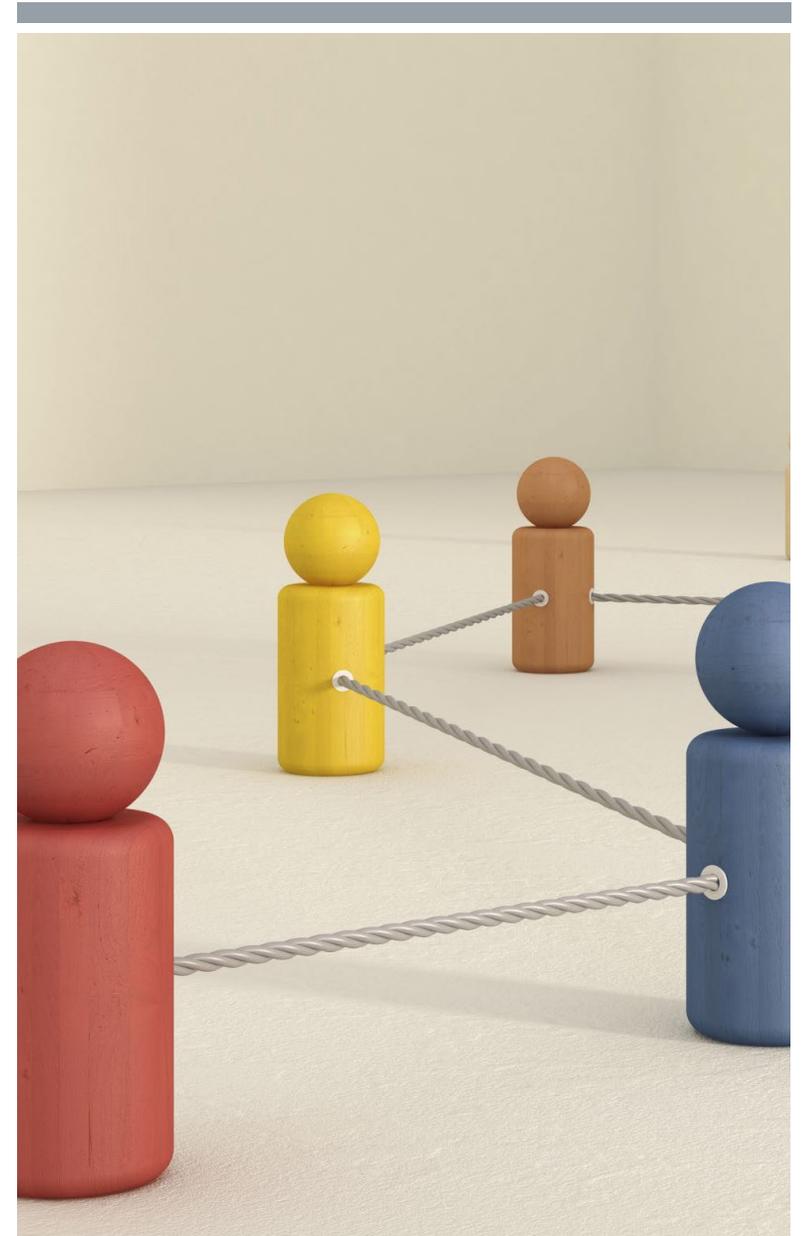
- Relationship
- Affinity
- Acceptance
- Fellowship
- Association
- Loyalty
- Attachment
- Inclusion
- Rapport
- Affiliation
- Kinship
- Connectedness
- Closeness
- Membership
- Community
- Solidarity
- Family
- Understanding
- Conformity

WORDS WE CHOOSE FOR EXCLUSION

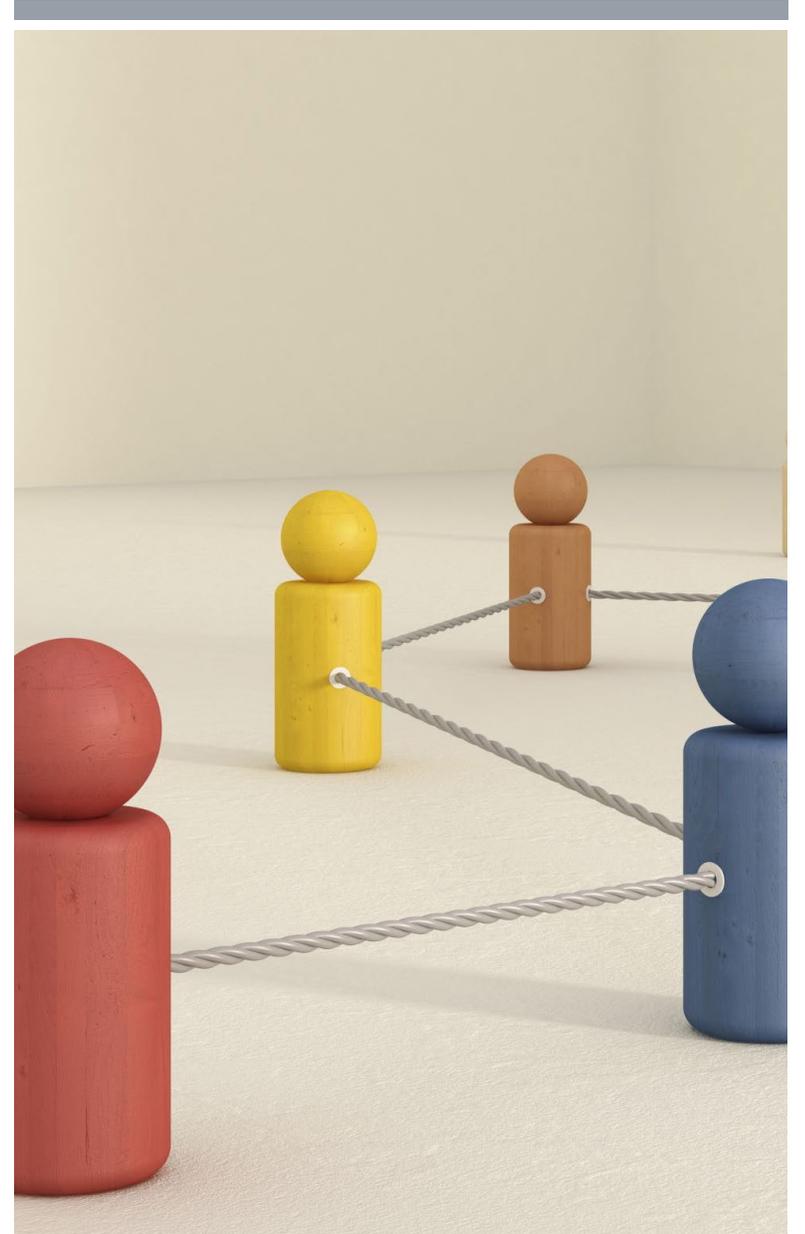
- Remoteness
- Indifference
- Disaffected
- Loneliness
- Exile
- Segregation
- Otherness
- Displacement
- Isolation
- Disconnected
- Estrangement
- Outcast
- Divorce
- Withdrawal
- Separation
- Exclusion
- Rejection
- The black sheep
- The deviant
- The drifter
- The misfit
- The outsider
- The rebel
- The whistle blower

Bonding. Referring to those relationships and norms that strengthen ties within groups - thought of as connections to people. Bonding is the glue that binds a community together that might exist for some similar identity driven reason.

Bridging. Refers to connections across groups to broaden the conception of the mainstream. Bridging creates outward looking networks and can bring together people from a variety of backgrounds and create new common ground, and new identifications within a larger whole.



Linking. Describes connections to people in positions of power. Linking is the lever which facilitates collective action like leveraging resources and can be thought of as the element which, when combined with a presence of both **bonding and bridging create integration, just as bonding and bridging can build belonging.**



3 TYPES OF PSYCHOLOGICAL SAFETY

- **SAFE TO BE YOURSELF** Employees feel free to express themselves authentically, without the need for “covering,” or the concealment of identity, to try to fit in.
- **SAFE TO TAKE RISKS** Employees to see challenges as opportunities, experiment more, and recognize that skills are improvable — not set in stone. This is created when employees are encouraged to think with a growth mindset.
- **SAFE TO SPEAK UP** Employees speak up more at work, when they need to challenge another person about their behavior or decision.

4 STAGES OF PSYCHOLOGICAL SAFETY

Stage 1: Learner Safety

Stage 2: Challenger Safety

Stage 3: Contributor Safety

Stage 4: Inclusion Safety



STAGES OF EMOTIONAL/PSYCHOLOGICAL SAFETY

Stage 1: Learner Safety

Learner safety satisfies the need to learn and grow. In this stage, you feel safe to exchange in the learning process, by asking questions, giving and receiving feedback, experimenting, and making mistakes. Is it safe to:

- Discover
- Ask Questions
- Experiment
- Learn from Mistakes
- Look for New Opportunities

STAGES OF EMOTIONAL/PSYCHOLOGICAL SAFETY

Stage 2: Challenger Safety

Challenger safety satisfies the need to make things better. You feel safe to speak up and challenge the status quo when you think there's an opportunity to change or improve. It's safe to:

- Challenge the status quo
- Speak up
- Express ideas identified changes
- Expose problems

STAGES OF EMOTIONAL/PSYCHOLOGICAL SAFETY

Stage 3: Contributor/Collaborator Safety

Contributor safety satisfies the need to make a difference. You feel safe to use your skills and abilities to make a meaningful contribution. It's safe to:

- Engage in an unconstrained way
- Interact with colleagues
- Have mutual access maintain open dialogue
- Foster constructive debate

STAGES OF EMOTIONAL/PSYCHOLOGICAL SAFETY

Stage 4: Inclusion Safety

Inclusion safety satisfies the basic human need to connect and belong. In this stage, you feel safe to be yourself and are accepted for who you are, including your unique attributes and defining characteristics. Is it safe to:

- Know that you are valued
- Treat all people fairly
- Feel that your experience and ideas matter
- Include others regardless of title/position
- Openly contribute

BELONGING AND IDENTITY

- Belonging = Perceived fit within a group or domain
 - Identity = Importance placed on being a member of a group or domain
-
- Instead of focusing on building community at work which sometimes creates an inner circle strive to create a space where every person feels a sense of belonging.
 - A sense of belonging to a community is what gives so many people purpose and meaning in their lives, and this is no less true in our workplaces.
 - 79% of organizations say fostering a sense of belonging in the workforce is important or very important for their success over the next 12 to 18 months, but only 13% say they are very ready to address this trend. This is known as the readiness gap.

THE ELEMENTS OF COMMUNITY

- Invite people who are not used to being together
- Focus on possibilities
- Act as if you are creating what exists in the world
- Allow room for dissent
- Define members of the community by their gifts and talents rather than by their needs and deficiencies
- Create community by focusing on the structure of how we gather and the context in which those gatherings take place



Organizational efforts to foster belonging have historically and primarily focused on making every individual feel respected and treated fairly in an inclusive work environment. While this remains foundational, leading organizations are forging a stronger link between belonging and organizational performance by strengthening workers connection with their teams and fostering their sense of contribution to meaningful shared goals.

COMFORT, CONNECTION, CONTRIBUTION

Survey results from 2020 Deloitte Global Human Capital Trend Report offer the following:

- 25% of survey respondents identified fostering an environment where workers feel they are treated fairly and can bring their authentic selves to work as the biggest driver of belonging
- 31% said that having a sense of community and identifying with a defined team was the biggest driver
- and 44% reported that feeling aligned to the organization's purpose mission and values and being valued for their individual contributions was the biggest driver of belonging at work

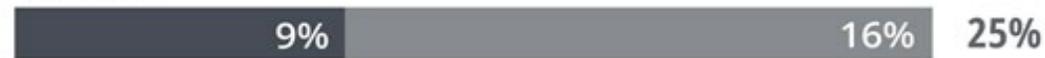
FIGURE 1

Contribution and connection drive belonging more than comfort alone

Which of the following is the biggest driver of creating belonging in your organization?

- Workers who can bring their full, authentic selves to the workplace
- Workers who are treated fairly
- Workers who can identify with a defined team (e.g., function, department, geography, etc.)
- Workers have a sense of community and feel connected to others in the organization
- Workers who are valued for their individual contributions
- Workers who feel aligned with the organization's purpose, mission, and values

Comfort



Connection



Contribution

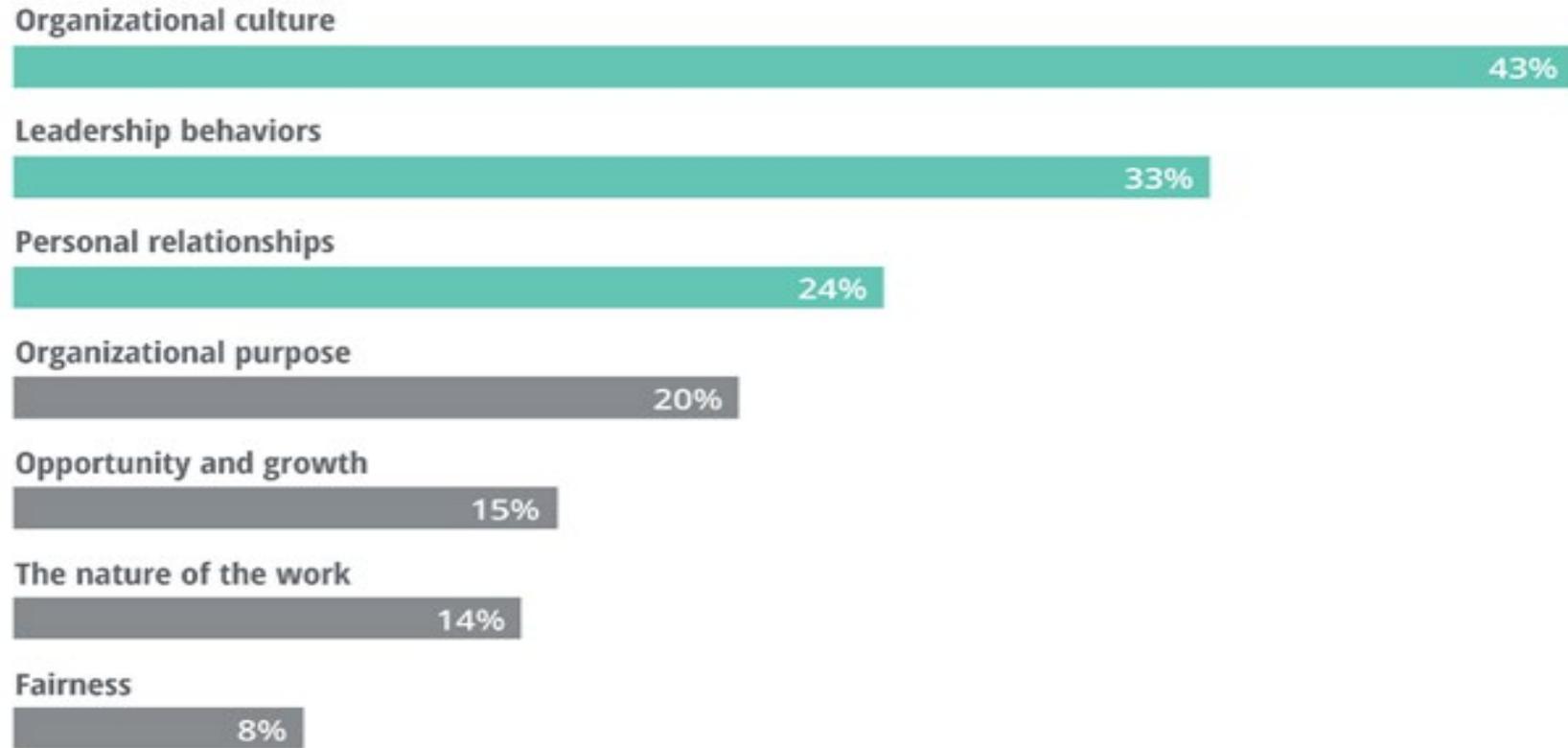


Source: Deloitte Global Human Capital Trends survey, 2020.

FIGURE 2

Culture, leadership, and personal relationships are the biggest factors influencing an organization's ability to create belonging

What factors most influence your organization's ability to create a sense of belonging? Select up to two.



Source: Deloitte Global Human Capital Trends survey, 2020.



A 2019 study by BetterUp found:

- that workplace belonging can lead to an estimated 56% increase in job performance
- a 50% reduction in turnover
- and a 75% decrease in employee sick days
- they are 167% more likely to recommend their employer as a great place to work
- the study found that a single incident of micro exclusion can lead to an immediate 25% decline in an individual's performance on a team project

ASKING.....

With a show of hands on how many of you have actually asked your employees if they feel like they belong?

How did you ask?
Did you hear anything that surprised you?

How many of you have ever been asked that question?

And your response?



EXCLUSION IS PAINFUL

Psychological consequences:

- sadness, anger
- decreased self-esteem
- impaired self-regulation poor cognitive function

Physical consequences:

- brain science suggests social pain and physical pain are experienced in overlapping brain systems
- loneliness poses the same health risks as smoking, drinking and obesity

ACTIVITY

Think about a time when you didn't experience belonging in a group. What happened?

Think about a time you witnessed someone else struggle with belonging. What happened? What did it look like?





EXCLUSION CAN SHOW UP AS.....

- was told to find another seat because a peer has been sitting in that chair "every Monday morning for the past 10 years".
- shutting down or ignored when I bring forward a new idea.
- your entire team goes for coffee after the meeting, but no one asked you, the new person.
- 2 months into the job and you still just feel lost and that you aren't ever going to be as good as ____.
- believe I was hired as part of a D&I initiative and all they really wanted was for me to be quiet and not get in the way.

- 
- It's important to bring forward the conversation that while some have feelings of not belonging and they may be tied to things we expect.... there are so many other factors that we can't see or hear that influence an employee's sense of belonging.
 - imposter syndrome
 - lack of performance feedback
 - poorly defined roles or objectives
 - seniority-based elitism

ABC'S

- Achievement
- Belonging
- Contribution

According to a 2020 research by HR.com, Ultimate Software and HR Research Institute what helps create a sense of belonging includes:

- being recognized for accomplishments (61%)
- feeling contributions are valued (59%)
- having the chance to express honest opinions
- feeling free to be yourself

SURVEY QUESTIONS

Q: At work, who is the most responsible for making you feel like you belong?

- Coworkers – 62%
- Direct Manager – 49%
- Yourself - 43%
- Executive Leadership – 29%
- Administrative Support Staff - 22%
- HR – 21%



Q: To what extent do you agree with the following statements about how you feel about your job?

- I'm viewed as productive employee in my workplace 83%
- I usually feel engaged at work 78%
- I'm empowered to do my job the way it should be done 73%
- I'm proud to work in my organization 69%
- We celebrate collective successes at work 64%
- I'm often asked for input 62%
- A sense of belonging currently pervades our corporate culture 57%
- I feel burned out in my job 47% I feel lonely at work 31%

Percentages based on strongly agree and moderately agree

ACTIVITY

What Would Make You
Feel Like You Belong
at the Organization
Where You Work?



What would make you feel like you belong at the company where you work?



HOW INCLUSIVE IS YOUR TEAM?

Creating the culture of belonging that will retain valuable employees means taking deliberate action starting with a few simple practices:

- Allow vulnerability to create safety
- Schedule intentional connections
- Create a feedback loop cultivate caring managers
- Eliminate outsidersness
- Bring everyone on board
- Demonstrate care through benefits and initiatives
- Track happiness and belonging
- Social Bonds
- Sharing stories – bringing it out into the open
 - “How might we sessions”
- Know how you're tracking
 - Employee Engagement Surveys
- Trusting relationships
- Intentional about inclusion
- A shared vision

FOSTERING WORKPLACE BELONGING

- It is the job of leaders and managers to create an environment which cooperative cultivation can flourish and thrive
- Adopting workplace discrimination and harassment policy's that prohibit exclusion and physical slash psychological harm
- Prioritize belonging publicly by including it as a strategic goal in short- and long-term plans
- Incorporated in vision statements, annual reports, and even company taglines
- Put the words into action by modeling inclusive leadership from the top down
- Ask how staff are doing today and wait to listen attentively to the answer they ask follow up questions, acknowledge feelings, and avoid distractions when engaging with team members
- It's about being part of the conversation, invited to share one's experience



GROWTH MINDSET

Farrington's Four Key Mindsets:

- I belong in this community
- I can succeed at this
- My ability and my competence grow with my effort
- This work has value for me

IT COULD LOOK LIKE THIS.....

Fixed - Comfort

- I do not know where to start or what to say .
- I don't want to get it wrong or get called out.
- It won't make a difference what I do, nothing is going to change.

Growth - Courage

- First, I will listen, read and watch. I will speak against injustice
- I will make mistakes, no doubt about it I will be grateful for the lesson
- Things happen when I take risks and become part of something bigger.

ACTIVITY

What can we do to make others feel included from the day they start throughout their employment?



IDEAS

- **Shout-Outs:** This is a quick way for students to celebrate each other for doing a job well or for attempting something difficult.
- **Friendly Fridays:** as a simple way for individuals to lift each other and themselves up. Write a friendly, anonymous note to a co-worker, practice using positive self-talk, or use storytelling to give a peer a pep talk.
- **Sharing Acts of Kindness:** The Supervisor gives employees secret kindness instructions, such as writing an anonymous note to a peer who is struggling.
 - An employee posts a thank you note on a shared digital “kindness wall.”
- **Instead of rules.** Employees develop a set of norms for themselves—adjectives that describe them as a community.

IDEAS

- **Appreciation, Apology, Aha:** As a quick, daily (or meeting) closing activity. Perhaps gather in a circle - share an appreciation of one of their peers, an apology, or a light bulb moment. The supervisor models the activity by sharing and then asks for volunteers to speak. This can be done at the beginning of a meeting as Thanks You's and Appreciations. (Build the bonds, opportunity to connect, community recognition....have some space to reflect on the day.
- **Snowball Toss:** Employees anonymously write down one of their stressors (ideas, gratitude's, etc.) on a piece of paper, crumple it up, gather in a circle, and throw their paper balls in a mock snowball fight. When that's done, they pick up a snowball and read it aloud.

AIRBNB

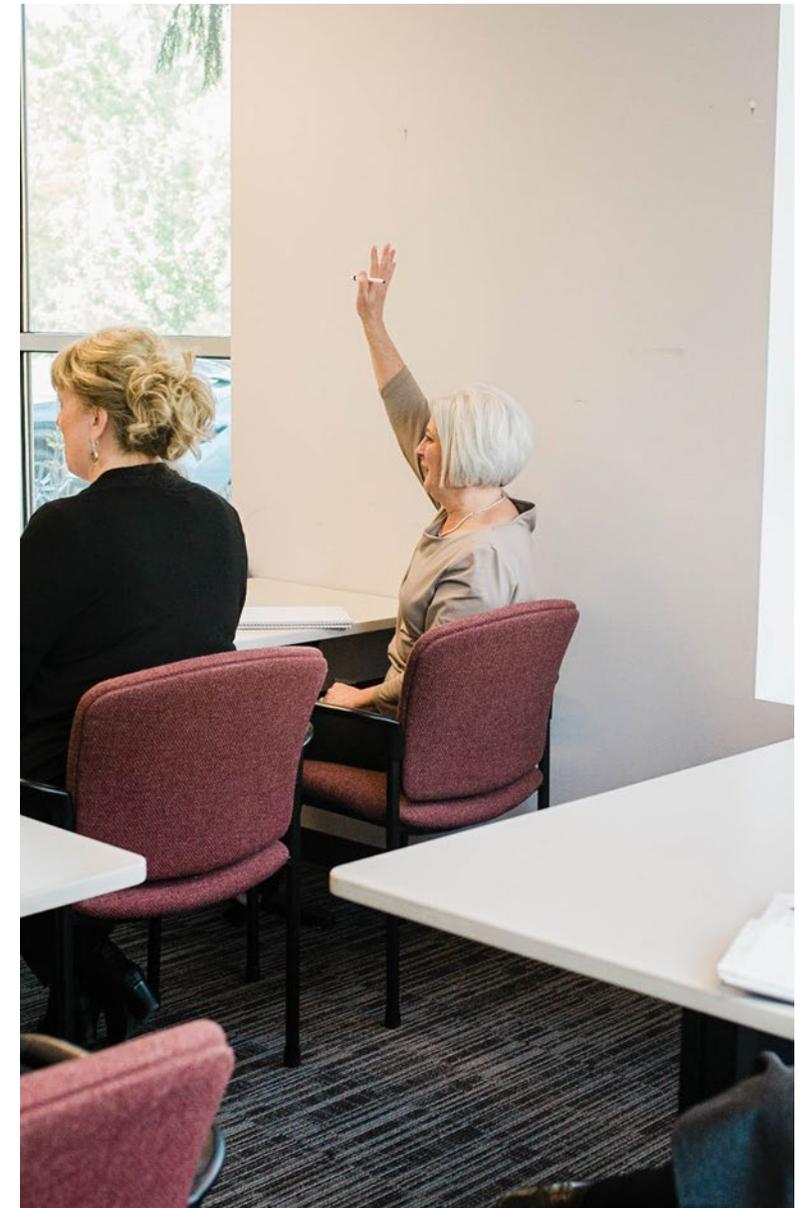
- Elephants are the big things that are happening, and people are scared to address.
- Dead fish are things that happened years ago and haven't been dealt with.
- Vomit are things that people just need to get off their minds.

Having fun labels like these make giving feedback and sharing otherwise uncomfortable information a less stressful process.

Powerful questions are those that evoke a choice for accountability and commitment.

Powerful questions are the ones that cause you to become an actor as soon as you answer them. You no longer have the luxury of being a spectator of whatever it is you are concerned about.

Questions that have the power to make a difference are the ones that engage people in an intimate way, confront them with their freedom, and invite them to create a future possibility.



Questions With Little Power

- How do you get people to serve on committees?
- How do you get people to accept the move within the office
- How do you get people to invest more time?
- How do you get people to attend more meetings?

Powerful Questions

- What gifts do you hold that you are willing to bring to this workplace?
- What are you willing to give up in order to move forward?
- What is the commitment you bring to this team?
- How valuable do you want your employment experience to be?



Powerful questions give us the means to initiate a community where accountability and commitment are ingrained. In doing so we create a sense of belonging.

These questions lead to conversations that are central to a transformative and inclusive community and include the following:

- Inviting rather than mandating
- Focusing on what is possible
- Creating ownership
- Ensuring commitments without bargaining
- Acknowledging the gift of each person and the community



Really need to think about this topic when it comes to the NEW Workplace.



What will it look like?



How do we get to belonging when we have people starting and they never come into the building and may take a while to meet their co-workers?

THE FUTURE

REFLECTION

- What stood out for you, increased your knowledge, or changed your thinking during this session?
- What is one thing you learned or discussed today that you will take back and apply to your work?

“Be yourself, everyone else is already taken.”

– Oscar Wilde

QUESTIONS?





ADDENDUM



REMOTE LIFESTYLE QUESTIONS

THE QUESTIONS BELOW WILL HELP YOU UNDERSTAND HOW THEIR DAY IS STRUCTURED AND IDENTIFY WAYS YOU MAY BE ABLE TO HELP THEM

- What's your favorite part about working remote? (Understand what drives them)
- What's your daily routine like for working?
- What's the highlight of your day? (Look for signs of loneliness, encourage socializing, or routines to encourage)
- What's most challenging for you in your daily work routine? (Help troubleshoot)
- What do you do to recharge each day?
- What's your setup like for working?

REMOTE LIFESTYLE QUESTIONS

THE QUESTIONS BELOW WILL HELP YOU UNDERSTAND HOW THEIR DAY IS STRUCTURED AND IDENTIFY WAYS YOU MAY BE ABLE TO HELP THEM

- What's one thing we could get for you that would make your work easier or better?
 - What's the most important thing we do to help you be successful working remotely?
 - How do you manage distractions during the day? Is it a challenge for you?
 - What were the most challenging and surprising things when you first started?
 - What helps you feel connected to others and counteract the potential loneliness of working remotely?
 - Do you think you can fully disconnect at the end of the day or when you're on vacation? What helps you do so?
- ** How long have you been working remotely? Why did you start working remotely?*

QUESTIONS - INFO DISSEMINATION

- What do you want to learn more about our team / the organization? (Harder to learn when you're not around the office).
- Have you been surprised by any news announced at an all hands? What was it?
- Do you feel included in our team decisions? Why/why not?
- Do you feel the organization supports remote staff effectively? How could we improve?
- How are the tools we use as a team working out for you remotely? (i.e.- Are they handicapped by poor audio on hangouts or the like?)

QUESTIONS - INFO DISSEMINATION

- What challenges do you feel you have compared to those in the office?
- Are there any tools that we should try out that could help us improve our remote culture?
- Are our meetings friendly to remote folks like you? What could we improve?
- Do you think our decision-making process works effectively while also supporting our remote culture? Have you seen a decision drag out for too long lately? (Decision making is hard and usually longer in remote teams and is worth constantly monitoring the pulse on)

It's hard to always recognize who isn't in the room. Remembering to keep remote team members in the loop is a problem that requires a consistent, intentional effort and doesn't always work out perfectly.

CONNECTION

- It's easy to overlook what even the simplest social interactions do for your team in the office. Even simple day-to-day banter can build strong bonds for teams.
- Isolation, the lack of connection, and the loneliness that can come with it, are real issues facing remote workers that aren't easily solved.
- One of the greatest challenges of working remotely is the **lack of context**.
- Most of the information we take in from a conversation is non-verbal. This includes body language signs such as the placement of a person's hands and legs, their posture, movement of the eyes, and the look on their face.
- All you have to go off of is the other person's words.

CONNECTION QUESTIONS

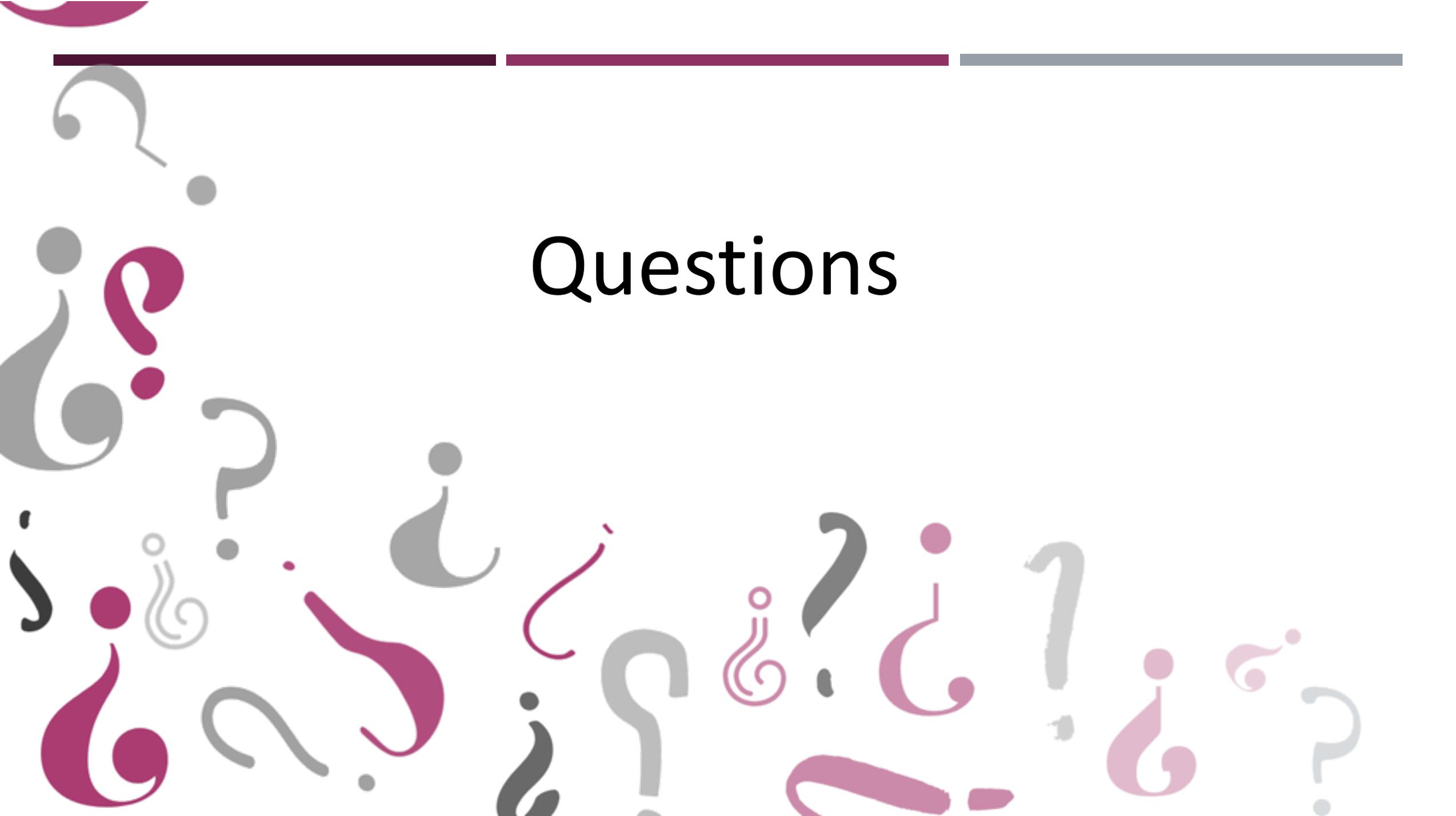
Use these questions to ensure your remote employees are building bonds and connecting with the entire team:

- How well do you feel you know your coworkers?
- Which of your coworkers do you wish you had more of a connection with? How do you think that would help?
- You visit the office X times a year. Do you feel like that's too much, not enough, or just right?
- How could I better support remote staff like you?

CONNECTION QUESTIONS

- When you have a creative idea or epiphany, what do you do with it? (The kinds of things that would get openly discussed in an office could be missing for them).
- Do you feel like you have opportunities for “water-cooler” type discussions with the team to help you spur on ideas? What ideas do you have for how we could create more of them?
- Do you feel supported by the team so that you could go to anyone asking them for help? (In remote teams, this can be a problem. Ideally, you want everyone to feel like they can go to anyone and ask them about something).
- Do you feel like you’re a full member of the team? What makes you feel connected/disconnected?

Questions

The background features a collection of question marks in various colors (maroon, grey, black) and sizes, scattered across the page. Some are large and prominent, while others are smaller and more subtle. The overall aesthetic is clean and modern.

ABOUT HR ANSWERS, INC.



- Largest independently owned HR Consulting, Staffing and Training organization.
- 38 years old firm headquartered in the NW.
- We work with organizations of all sizes as well as Private Sector, Public Sector and NFP organizations.
- We can customize our services and products to meet you where you are at.

Affirmative Action Plans ● Compensation ● Employee Opinion Surveys ● Employee Relations ● Handbooks ● HR Hotline ● Internal Investigations
● Job Descriptions ● Labor Relations ● Mediation ● Performance Management ● Policies ● Training & Development

CONSULTING SERVICES

- Investigation
- Handbooks
- Compensation
- Salary Surveys
- Performance Management
- Employee Opinion Surveys
- AAPs
- Just in time advice



www.hranswers.com

EDUCATIONAL SERVICES

- Live
- In person
- Recorded
- Custom
- Consistent
- Education
- Training
- Presentations



info@hranswers.com

RECRUITMENT SERVICES

- Backgrounds Checks
- Reference Checks
- Job Ads
- Resume Screening
- Interview Assistance
- Offer Letters
- Restrictive Covenants



503-885-9815