



“Start with Self”. Inclusive Training Proficiency

A competence model for business trainers and educators who care

Part 6 **Anti-discrimination intervention**



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Anti-discrimination intervention

Inclusion isn't passive — it requires action. Anti-Discrimination Intervention prepares trainers to recognize and address discriminatory behavior, bias, or exclusion in real time. It takes courage to step in, but also skill to do so constructively and without shaming. This competence helps you respond confidently to difficult moments, transform tension into learning, and model what accountability and respect look like in practice. As trainers, we can't prevent every mistake, but we can decide how to respond when they happen.

From this e-book, you will learn:

1. What is Anti-discrimination intervention competence?
2. What might hold you back?
3. How to identify excluding behaviours?
4. How to do it differently?
5. What good practices will help you develop this competency?
6. How to begin?

**Grow your inclusive
competencies!**

Check out other competencies from
our model!

INCLUDE Project Team





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1. What is Anti-Discrimination Intervention?

1.1 Definition

Anti-Discrimination Intervention is the skilled ability to recognise, address, and transform moments of discrimination, bias, or exclusionary behaviour in real-time during training sessions.

It requires courage, emotional regulation, and practical skills to interrupt harmful dynamics whilst maintaining psychological safety and turning these challenging moments into learning opportunities.

This competency goes beyond simply stopping problematic behaviour; it involves creating constructive dialogue, supporting affected individuals, and helping groups develop greater awareness and accountability around issues of equity and inclusion.

1.2 If you're interested in expanding your knowledge about research and sources:

- Bystander Intervention Theory: Research by John Darley and Bibb Latané on the bystander effect shows that people are more likely to intervene when they have specific skills and preparation. Training in intervention techniques significantly increases the likelihood that individuals will take action when they witness harmful behaviour (The Unresponsive Bystander, 1970).
- Microaggressions Research: Derald Wing Sue's extensive work on microaggressions (subtle, often unconscious discriminatory comments and actions) provides frameworks for understanding and addressing these common but harmful interactions (Microaggressions in Everyday Life, 2010).
- Restorative Justice Practices: Research by Howard Zehr and others demonstrates that focusing on repair and learning, rather than punishment, creates more effective and lasting behavioural change (The Little Book of Restorative Justice, 2002).



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1.3 By working on this competency, you will:

- Maintain psychological safety when tensions arise: skilful intervention prevents discriminatory incidents from escalating and damaging the trust and safety that participants need for effective learning.
- Transform difficult moments into powerful learning opportunities: when handled well, discrimination incidents become chances for the entire group to deepen their understanding of inclusion and develop greater empathy and awareness.
- Build credibility as a trainer who can handle complexity: participants and organisations trust trainers who can navigate difficult interpersonal dynamics with skill and professionalism, leading to more opportunities and referrals.

2. What might hold you back?

2.1 Common thinking traps:

| Beliefs | Possible consequences |
|---|--|
| Addressing discrimination will make things worse or create more conflict. | This avoidance allows harmful behaviour to continue and escalate, signals to affected participants that they're not protected, and normalises discrimination within the learning environment. |
| I don't want to embarrass or shame anyone by calling out their behaviour. | Whilst good intentions around dignity matter, this belief prioritises the comfort of those causing harm over the safety of those being harmed, often allowing discriminatory patterns to continue. |
| People should work these issues out themselves without my intervention. | This belief places an unfair burden on those experiencing discrimination to educate or confront those causing harm, often in situations where power dynamics make this unsafe or ineffective. |



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3. Identify excluding behaviours

Before you can change something, you need to notice it first. Here are some behaviours that might exclude people. Do any of these ring a bell? You might have seen them in yourself, participants, or fellow trainers.

In the second column, we explain exactly why these behaviours are excluding, so you can get a fuller picture.

| Behaviour | Why does it exclude? |
|---|--|
| Ignoring or pretending not to notice discriminatory comments or "jokes". | This silent approval signals that such behaviour is acceptable, encourages its continuation, and tells targeted individuals that they cannot expect protection or support. |
| Making excuses for discriminatory behaviour (e.g., "They didn't mean it that way" or "That's just how they are"). | This minimises the impact on those harmed, removes accountability from the person causing harm, and teaches the group that discrimination will be tolerated if there's a plausible excuse. |
| Addressing discrimination privately only, without acknowledging the public impact. | While private conversation may be needed, exclusively private responses leave the harmful public message uncorrected and don't provide learning opportunities for witnesses. |
| Rushing past discriminatory incidents without processing or learning. | This approach misses valuable opportunities to build group understanding and skills, and may leave participants feeling that their experiences of discrimination don't matter. |



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4. How to do it differently?

The best way to learn? Get concrete and hands-on! Now that you know what excluding behaviours look like in anti-discrimination intervention, let's flip the script. In the third column below, you'll find inclusive approaches for these exact same situations.

| Excluding behaviour | Why does it exclude? | Including behaviour |
|--|--|---|
| Ignoring or pretending not to notice discriminatory comments or "jokes". | This silent approval signals that such behaviour is acceptable, encourages its continuation, and tells targeted individuals that they cannot expect protection or support. | Address problematic comments directly and promptly. Use phrases like "I want to pause here because that comment doesn't align with our values of inclusion" or "Let's unpack what was just said because it could be hurtful to some group members." |
| Making excuses for discriminatory behaviour. | This minimises the impact on those harmed, removes accountability from the person causing harm. | Focus on impact rather than intent. Say "Regardless of what was intended, that comment could be experienced as hurtful by people with [specific identity]. Let's talk about why and how we might phrase that differently." |
| Addressing discrimination privately only, without acknowledging the public impact. | While private conversation may be needed, exclusively private responses leave the harmful public message uncorrected. | Address the public harm publicly, whilst offering private follow-up. Acknowledge what happened to the group: "I want to address what just occurred because it affects all of us." Then offer individual conversation afterward for deeper processing. |
| Rushing past discriminatory incidents without processing or learning. | This approach misses valuable opportunities to build group understanding and skills. | Create intentional space for learning and repair. Ask questions like "What did others notice about that interaction?" or "How might we handle similar situations differently?" Help the group process and learn together. |

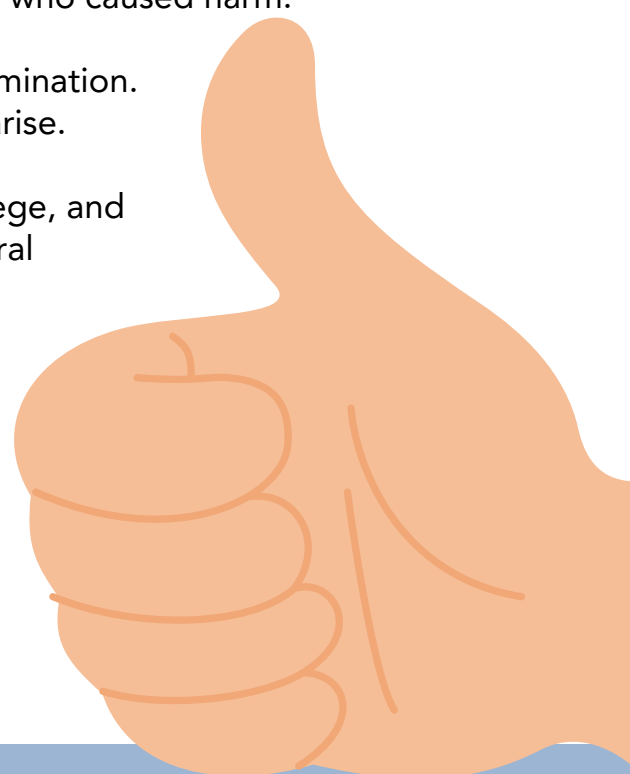


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5. Good practices

- Develop a personal intervention toolkit. Practice specific phrases and approaches for different types of discriminatory behaviour. Having prepared language reduces anxiety and increases the likelihood that you'll speak up effectively when incidents occur.
- Establish clear expectations about respectful behaviour early. Include explicit anti-discrimination language in your group agreements. When participants know the standards from the beginning, interventions feel less surprising and more aligned with shared commitments.
- Check in with affected individuals. After addressing discrimination publicly, follow up privately with anyone who may have been targeted or harmed. Ask what support they need and how the situation could be handled better in the future.
- Focus on learning rather than punishment. Frame interventions as opportunities for growth: "This is a chance for us to practice what inclusive communication looks like" rather than shaming or attacking the person who caused harm.
- Normalise the conversation about bias and discrimination. Don't only address these topics when problems arise.

Regular discussion about unconscious bias, privilege, and inclusive behaviour makes interventions feel natural extensions of ongoing learning.





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6. First step

Great, you've got the theory down and probably have a good sense of what we mean by Anti-discrimination intervention.

Now we encourage you to tune into the emotions, thoughts, and reactions you had while working through this competency.

You can take your first step right now . No need to call anyone, set up meetings, or make any arrangements. Just stick around for a few more minutes and tackle one of the questions below.

Or go ahead and try all of them:

- How did it feel working on this competency?
- What behaviours can you start using immediately?
- Did anything bug you?
- What parts did you want to skip?
- What does your reaction tell you about yourself?

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