

PREPARED FOR

Manas – Center for Mental Wellness & Counselling

Inclusion, Belonging, and Mental Health – An Integrated Framework

Building Cultures Where Every Employee Can Bring Their Whole Self

Presented by Dr. Priya Dubey Sharma

Manas – Center for Mental Wellness & Counselling

UDYAM-MP-10-0120839



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Programme Overview

This advanced programme explores the profound link between psychological belonging and mental well-being, demonstrating how fostering an inclusive environment is not merely a policy but a crucial driver of employee health and organizational success. We delve into the measurable impact of inclusion and the often-unseen harm caused by exclusion, providing actionable strategies tailored for the Indian corporate landscape.

Learning Objectives

- ✓ Participants will gain a deep understanding of the psychological underpinnings of belonging and learn practical methods to assess its presence within their organizations. This knowledge is vital for creating environments where every individual feels valued and connected.
- ✓ Participants will learn about the neurobiological consequences of exclusion and how these manifest as significant mental health challenges, equipping them to address these issues proactively and empathetically.
- ✓ Participants will explore the complexities of intersectionality within Indian workplaces, recognizing how multiple identity factors like gender, caste, religion, region, and disability shape individual experiences of inclusion and belonging.
- ✓ Participants will identify and practice specific, observable inclusive leadership behaviours that actively cultivate a sense of psychological safety and belonging for all team members.
- ✓ Participants will develop an understanding of how to design and implement systemic changes in hiring, onboarding, development, and recognition processes to embed inclusion and belonging at every stage of the employee lifecycle.
- ✓ Participants will formulate a strategic action plan to champion diversity, inclusion, and mental well-being initiatives within their respective organizations, driving sustainable positive change.


WHO SHOULD ATTEND

This programme is designed for CEOs, CHROs, Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) leads, and all managerial staff who are committed to creating a more humane and high-performing workplace.

Programme Content

1. The Psychology of Belonging and Its Measurement

This section unpacks the fundamental human need for belonging, exploring its deep roots in our psychology and its critical role in overall well-being. We will discuss how a lack of belonging can lead to disengagement, stress, and reduced productivity. Practical methods for measuring the 'sense of belonging' within your teams will be introduced, drawing on established psychological frameworks to provide actionable insights into employee sentiment and organizational culture.

 **Activity: Small group discussion: Sharing current methods for gauging employee connection and identifying areas for improvement.**

2. How Exclusion Harms Mental Health — Neurobiological Evidence

Delving into the science, this segment illuminates the profound impact of social exclusion on the brain and nervous system. We will examine the neurobiological responses triggered by feeling ostracized or marginalized, explaining how these can contribute to heightened anxiety, depression, and chronic stress. Understanding these mechanisms empowers leaders to recognize the tangible mental health implications of non-inclusive practices and the urgent need for intervention.

 **Activity: Case study analysis: Discussing real-world scenarios of exclusion and their documented mental health effects.**

3. Intersectionality in Indian Workplaces

Recognizing the diverse tapestry of India, this section focuses on intersectionality – how multiple aspects of identity converge to shape an individual's experience at work. We will explore how gender, caste, religion, region, and disability interact, creating unique challenges and opportunities for inclusion. This nuanced understanding is essential for developing equitable policies and practices that genuinely support all employees, moving beyond a one-size-fits-all approach.

 **Activity: Interactive exercise: Mapping potential intersectional challenges within hypothetical Indian workplace scenarios.**

4. Inclusive Leadership Behaviours

Effective inclusion is driven by leadership action. This segment identifies specific, observable behaviours that foster a culture of belonging, such as active listening, empathetic communication, equitable opportunity distribution, and courageous advocacy. We will provide practical tools and techniques for leaders to cultivate these behaviours, enabling them to create psychologically safe environments where diverse perspectives are welcomed and valued.

 **Activity: Role-playing: Practicing inclusive communication and feedback techniques.**

5. Systems for Belonging: Hiring, Onboarding, Development, Recognition

True inclusion is embedded within organizational systems. This section examines how to integrate belonging into critical HR processes, from unbiased hiring and inclusive onboarding to equitable career development and meaningful recognition. We will explore how to design and audit these systems to mitigate bias and ensure fairness, creating a consistent experience of support and opportunity for everyone.

 **Activity: Workshop: Brainstorming specific system enhancements for hiring, onboarding, development, and recognition.**

6. Building a Sustainable Culture of Belonging

This concluding section synthesizes the programme's learnings into a strategic framework for sustained cultural change. We will discuss how to embed diversity, inclusion, and mental well-being into the organization's core values and operational practices. Emphasis will be placed on creating accountability mechanisms, continuous improvement, and leveraging data to track progress towards a truly inclusive and mentally healthy workplace.

 **Activity: Action planning: Developing a personalized roadmap for implementing key takeaways within participants' organizations.**



Action Plan

Concrete steps for implementation.

Action	Owner	Timeline	Notes
Conduct an organizational audit of current inclusion and belonging practices.	HR/Manager	Week 1	Utilize survey tools and focus groups to gather qualitative and quantitative data on employee perceptions of belonging.
Develop and deliver targeted training on inclusive leadership behaviours for all managers.	HR	Month 1	Incorporate practical exercises and real-world case studies relevant to the Indian context.
Review and revise hiring and onboarding processes to ensure inclusivity and mitigate bias.	Manager	Week 2	Focus on anonymizing applications where possible and standardizing interview questions.
Establish employee resource groups (ERGs) to support diverse employee populations.	HR	Month 1	Provide clear charters, budgets, and executive sponsorship for each ERG.
Implement a mentorship programme that pairs employees from diverse backgrounds.	HR/Manager	Month 2	Ensure mentors and mentees receive appropriate training and support.
Integrate belonging and mental well-being metrics into annual performance reviews and strategic planning.	Leadership	Quarter 1	Link leadership performance to demonstrable progress in fostering an inclusive culture.

About Manas



Dr. Priya Dubey Sharma

Founder & Consulting Psychologist | Applied, Organizational & Behavioural Psychologist | PhD | 18+ Years

Dr. Priya Dubey Sharma brings 18+ years of applied psychology to corporate wellness. She has worked with SBI, educational institutions, and corporate teams across India. Her evidence-based approach combines CBT, mindfulness, and culturally contextualised psychology for measurable outcomes. She is the creator of the Performance FOMO Index™ and the High-Functioning Distress Framework™.

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Disclaimer: This document has been prepared by Dr. Priya Dubey Sharma — Founder & Consulting Psychologist (Applied, Organizational & Behavioural Psychologist, PhD, 18+ years), Manas – Center for Mental Wellness & Counselling (UDYAM-MP-10-0120839). Content is for programme overview and educational purposes only. Nothing herein constitutes legal advice regarding POSH Act compliance — organisations should consult qualified legal counsel for specific legal guidance. For clinical or psychological support, please reach out to the Manas Team for personalised guidance, or consult a qualified Psychiatrist or licensed mental health professional. © 2026 Manas – Center for Mental Wellness & Counselling. All rights reserved. Confidential — prepared specifically for the named organisation. For queries: manu@manas365.com | +91 99818 13224 This document does not constitute a legal instrument and carries no legal standing or admissibility in any court of law or official proceeding.