

PREPARED FOR

Manas – Center for Mental Wellness & Counselling

Inclusion, Belonging, and Mental Health at Work

Creating a Workplace Where Everyone Can Thrive

Presented by Dr. Priya Dubey Sharma

Manas – Center for Mental Wellness & Counselling

UDYAM-MP-10-0120839



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Programme Overview

This programme explores the profound impact of belonging on individual well-being and organisational success. By understanding the psychological underpinnings of inclusion and the detrimental effects of exclusion, participants will gain practical tools to foster a more supportive and mentally healthy work environment for everyone.

Learning Objectives

- ✓ Understand the fundamental human need for belonging and how its absence can negatively affect mental health and productivity, enabling you to recognise its importance in your workplace.
- ✓ Identify subtle yet harmful daily interactions (micro-aggressions) and comprehend their cumulative impact on colleagues' mental well-being, equipping you to address them more effectively.
- ✓ Learn actionable leadership strategies that actively promote an inclusive culture, empowering you to create an environment where all team members feel valued and respected.
- ✓ Develop empathy and practical approaches to support colleagues from diverse backgrounds, particularly those facing unique challenges related to caste, gender, religion, or region in the Indian context.
- ✓ Explore how organisational systems and policies can be intentionally designed to foster a pervasive sense of belonging, leading to a more equitable and engaging workplace.
- ✓ Gain a deeper appreciation for the interconnectedness of mental health and a sense of belonging, enabling you to champion initiatives that enhance both within your organisation.

WHO SHOULD ATTEND

This programme is designed for leaders, HR professionals, DEI committee members, and all employees who are committed to building a more inclusive, supportive, and mentally healthy workplace.

Programme Content

1. The Psychology of Belonging: Why It Matters

Belonging is a deep-seated human need, as essential as air or water for our well-being. When individuals feel a sense of connection and acceptance, their engagement, creativity, and overall mental health flourish. Conversely, experiences of exclusion or 'othering' can lead to significant distress, reduced performance, and a feeling of isolation, which is especially pertinent in diverse Indian workplaces grappling with historical social stratifications like caste and regional differences.

 **Activity: Group discussion: Share personal experiences of feeling a strong sense of belonging at work.**

2. Micro-aggressions and Their Mental Health Toll

Micro-aggressions are everyday, subtle, and often unintentional verbal or nonverbal slights that communicate hostile, derogatory, or negative messages to targeted persons based on their group membership. These can range from dismissive comments about someone's background to assumptions based on gender or religion, and their cumulative effect can be profoundly damaging to an individual's mental health, leading to anxiety, stress, and a feeling of being constantly on guard. Understanding these dynamics is crucial for fostering a respectful environment.

 **Activity: Scenario analysis: Discuss examples of micro-aggressions in a workplace setting and their potential impact.**

3. Inclusive Leadership Behaviours for a Thriving Team

Inclusive leaders are essential architects of belonging within an organisation. They actively seek out diverse perspectives, ensure equitable opportunities for all, and create psychological safety where individuals feel comfortable being their authentic selves. This involves conscious communication, fair decision-making processes, and a genuine commitment to understanding and valuing the unique contributions of each team member, regardless of their background or identity.

 **Activity: Role-playing: Practice active listening and empathetic responses in challenging team interactions.**

4. Supporting Marginalised Colleagues with Empathy

In the Indian context, colleagues from certain castes, religious minorities, or specific regions may face unique workplace challenges, including subtle discrimination or lack of understanding. Supporting them requires empathy, awareness of their experiences, and a willingness to advocate for their inclusion. This involves listening without judgment, challenging biases when you see them, and being an ally who actively works to dismantle barriers that may hinder their sense of belonging.

 **Activity: Brainstorming: Develop strategies for showing support to colleagues from diverse backgrounds.**


5. Building Systems for Sustainable Belonging

Creating a truly inclusive workplace requires more than just individual efforts; it necessitates embedding principles of belonging into the very fabric of the organisation. This includes reviewing policies and practices related to recruitment, promotion, and performance management to ensure fairness and equity, establishing clear channels for feedback and grievance redressal, and fostering a culture where diversity is celebrated as a strength. Such systemic changes create an environment where everyone can thrive.

 **Activity: Group activity: Identify one systemic change your team or organisation could implement to enhance belonging.**

6. Fostering a Culture of Psychological Safety

Psychological safety is the bedrock upon which belonging is built. It is a shared belief that the team is safe for interpersonal risk-taking, allowing individuals to speak up, ask questions, admit mistakes, and offer new ideas without fear of embarrassment or punishment. Cultivating this requires leaders to model vulnerability, respond constructively to errors, and actively solicit input from all team members, thereby nurturing an environment where everyone feels empowered and valued.

 **Activity: Individual reflection: Commit to one personal action to enhance psychological safety within your immediate team.**



Action Plan

Concrete steps for implementation.

Action	Owner	Timeline	Notes
Conduct a 'Belonging Audit' using anonymous surveys to gauge current employee perceptions.	HR/DEI Committee	Month 1	Ensure survey questions are culturally sensitive and cover diverse aspects of belonging relevant to the Indian workplace.
Integrate 'Inclusive Behaviours' training module into onboarding for all new hires.	HR	Quarter 1	Tailor content to address specific Indian cultural nuances and workplace dynamics.
Establish Employee Resource Groups (ERGs) focused on supporting diverse employee communities.	HR/Leadership	Quarter 2	Provide clear guidelines and resources for ERG establishment and operation, ensuring executive sponsorship.
Review and revise company policies (e.g., anti-discrimination, grievance) for inclusivity and equitable application.	HR/Legal	Month 2	Seek input from diverse employee groups during the review process.
Organise regular 'Lunch & Learn' sessions on topics related to mental well-being and inclusion.	HR/Wellness Committee	Ongoing (Monthly)	Invite internal or external speakers, ensuring topics are relevant and engaging for all employees.
Leadership team to publicly commit to fostering a culture of belonging and psychological safety.	Leadership	Week 1	This commitment should be communicated through company-wide announcements and integrated into leadership meetings.

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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A MSME-registered organisation dedicated to evidence-based mental wellness.

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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