

OK. I'm going to get started. Good afternoon. My name is Piper Kruse from SWE Headquarters. Thank you for joining us for this live learning opportunity, Creating Psychologically Safe Organizations. We can advance a slide.

Some practical matters before we get started-- there will be a Q&A with our speakers at the end of the presentation. So if you have a question, please type it in the Questions window, and it will be answered at the end of the presentation. We also have closed captioning available. You can turn that on or off by clicking on the Closed Caption button that appears below and to the right of your screen. Next slide, please.

SWE values your participation and feedback on this webinar and future webinars. So please take a moment afterwards to complete the survey. The survey can be found towards the bottom of this event's course page on the Advanced Learning Center or by going to the URL or using the QR code that is currently on the screen.

The goal of the Advanced Learning Center is to provide lifelong learning opportunities that support the advancement of women in engineering and technology. Your feedback on the survey allows us to keep making the content that you find useful. Next slide, please

Oh, this course offers 0.1 CEUs slash 1 PDH. To receive CEU slash PDH credit, the course must be viewed in its entirety. Additionally, you must also complete the knowledge check with an 80%. You can find the knowledge check towards the bottom of this event's course page on the Advanced Learning Center.

It is now my pleasure to introduce today's speakers, Megan Abman and Karyn Lu. Welcome, Megan and Karyn. The floor is yours.

Thank you so much, Piper. And seriously, massive round of applause to Piper to helping setting all of this up. We are honored to be able to speak with you all today and especially being able to partner with SWE.

If we haven't had the opportunity to meet yet, my name is Megan Abman, and I use they/she pronouns, meaning you can use they/them/theirs or she/her/hers. But when you use them interchangeably, that's when I feel most seen and recognized. And that's when I blush like crazy, as I identify as a nonbinary individual.

And one thing you should know about me is that I am obsessed with performance and winning. Even in my very first parent-teacher conference in first grade, my mom leans over to my first grade teacher and goes, OK, so how's Megan really doing? And my first grade teacher responds, well, she's doing all right. We're a little concerned about their competitiveness.

So at recess, this was still such a core component of who I am. And I'm telling you this story because, really, DEI&B, or Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Belonging, is so magical for me because it really unlocks everyone's best performance.

Yes, there is absolutely a moral imperative to this work. But for me, I really love exploring how we can help empower everyone to perform at their best. Because when you feel seen and recognized, then that's when you're able to really jump in with exciting ideas or maybe spot the error in a big project or collaboration with folks. So just so excited to be here with you all today. My background is in neuroscience, organizational psychology, as those are the tactics and how I really unlock DEI&B strategies within organizations.

Hello, everyone. Such a pleasure to be here. Thank you all for spending some time with us today. My name is Karyn Lu. I use she/her/hers pronouns. So Megan and I-- our superpower is that we have very, very different backgrounds, both professional and also in terms of many key facets of our identities. So we really enjoy being able to combine all of those lenses and different lived experiences together to bring into this work.

So as for me, I am an immigrant. English is my second language. I am a mother to two boys. They're nine and six. Always been a working mom. And I have an extensive background working primarily in the digital and technology space as a user experience researcher and designer and in product development as well. So I've done that in the private sector and also in the public sector, building digital products and services that serve everyone.

So I am coming to this body of DEI&B work from the core belief that truly diverse and inclusive teams always, always build more inclusive and more resilient products and services that truly benefit everyone. So I am based in Atlanta. Megan is in Denver. The two of us served together as fractional chief inclusion officers with organizations all over the country. And, again, we are so happy and honored to be here with you today.

All right. Wonderful. So now that you have a pretty good sense of who we are, what we're all about, and our philosophy when we approach this work, I wanted to give you all a sense of what we'll be covering today. So in our first major section of this webinar, we're going to be able to have an opportunity to really set the table on what it we mean when we use the terms diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging.

It's really important, once again, that we all level set on these terms so that we can feel most confident to engage in this space. Oftentimes, people are most fearful to engage because they don't want to make a mistake or offend anyone. And so for that reason, when we all are working from the same framework of understanding what these terms mean, this is a wonderful way to catalyze those meaningful conversations and to take deeper dives into different topics or really try and have a tailored approach to how you can unlock DEI&B within your respective organizations.

In our next major section of the material-- and, presumably, why you signed up for this webinar today-- that's where we're going to take a deeper dive into psychological safety. And really, it's in this section that we're going to be able to enjoy and explore together, what is psychological safety, and why is it so valuable, answering those questions.

And then the last portion-- and arguably the most important section of today's webinar-- is this is where now that we have the conceptual framework of what is psychological safety, why is it so valuable, how is it that we can take action on it to foster psychological safety through our behaviors in activating allyship at four different levels? But we'll get into that momentarily.

So, as you all know, especially with SWE and the module system that you all have in place, being able to be clear about what are the learning outcomes that you all can expect from this webinar, this nicely aligns to the three major portions of our material.

So after today's session, you all should be able to define diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging. You all will be able to understand what is psychological safety, why it fosters more inclusive and equitable working experiences overall. And then, finally, how is it that you can implement this actionable advice, weaving it even to your daily routines later on today or later on this week, to foster greater psychological safety? And we'll get into that through the four different levels of allyship. So really, really excited to be able to do this with you all today.

All right. So we'll begin with the language setting. As Megan mentioned, in any equity-based work, it is really important to have a shared language so that we can quickly and also more meaningfully deepen the conversation together.

So much about the way we work now is changing and evolving in real time. And it has to, right? We're talking about working in light of chronic stress from the pandemic, social and racial justice movements, political upheaval, you name it. So how in the world do we continue to show up for work and work together effectively in these times? It can't be all about work right now.

And, happily, many organizations are realizing that we can no longer expect people to leave behind our identities and experiences when we go to work. That was never the case. But, happily, more companies are realizing that now and embracing it. So truly, more than ever, DEI&B is really the foundation to thriving in doing any kind of work. So it's important to have a shared language.

All right. Let's go over what we mean. I want to start with the D for Diversity. Diversity is simply the presence of differences, the range of human differences, both inherent and acquired, both visible and invisible. This concept is sometimes called 2D diversity.

So from an organizational standpoint, it is really those organizations that recognize that diversity is about so much more than what we can see. It's those orgs that are more likely to outperform the ones that don't. So the elements that you see plus the stuff that you gain from your unique life experience-- where you were born, experiences where you grew up, maybe what other countries or sectors you've worked in, socioeconomic status, perhaps neurodivergence-- all of that is significant.

And the true goal here is to cultivate a group of individuals who collectively have a diversity of thought, or cognitive diversity. Great thinkers truly don't all think alike. We want people who are able to look at things differently, empathize differently, who problem solve differently. And that is all directly tied to productivity, to creativity, to innovation, to profit, and to impact, both inside and outside of the organization.

All right. So we're going to make the power of cognitive diversity come alive with a really fun example called the ketchup theory. So to be clear-- let me move the poll off my screen.

To be clear, we're not literally talking about ketchup. It's a metaphor. But take a moment and do consider where you keep your ketchup stored in your house. So Piper has kindly pulled up the poll. We'll give you a moment.

I'm interested to see the breakdown of this group.

Me too. Look at that-- 98% team fridge. Hello, 2% team pantry. All right. Thank you for participating. All right. So like most of you, the vast majority of you, I also keep my ketchup in the fridge.

However, we know from doing this work with folks around the world that many folks from Europe and also in the American South will tend to keep their ketchup in the pantry. And if you think about it, restaurants keep their ketchup out all the time.

So let's pretend that, Megan, you're team pantry. All right. So Megan and I are having a cookout together. And we both run out of ketchup, and there's no time to run to the store. So as we try to find a solution to replace the ketchup, our proposed condiment or proposed replacement condiment is probably informed by what is closely associated with where we keep our ketchup. That's kind of how our brain works.

So, for example, because I keep my metaphorical ketchup in the fridge, I automatically go to the fridge. And I look around. And the best I can do is come up with mayonnaise, whereas, Megan, you keep your ketchup in the cupboard. What might you propose?

All right. So going through my pantry, I would see hot sauce. And I grab that as the replacement condiment.

All right, fantastic. So all of a sudden, we've got hot sauce and mayonnaise. That's interesting. That's an interesting, innovative combination. We've just invented spicy mayo. That actually sounds pretty decent as a replacement.

But, however, if Megan had also kept their ketchup in the fridge and gone to the fridge and picked out mayonnaise, then we would just end up with a bunch of mayonnaise. And that would be pretty gross. So we like this playful example to hopefully inspire you to seek out those who can add a little bit of spice to your thinking and also to show you that this conversation doesn't have to be so serious and heavy all the time.

And it's really key to see that how even something so small and minute and seemingly inconsequential in our lives as where we store something can make a substantial difference in the level of innovation we ultimately produce together and how we can more effectively and creatively problem solve together. So what we really want you to remember from this is that we design better solutions through our differences, not in spite of them.

Powerful mic drop moment there-- through our differences, not in spite of them. All right. Let's go ahead and move on to the E in DEI&B for Equity. And, admittedly, this was the toughest term to wrap my head around when I first began my own DEI&B journey. And I think a really helpful way to conceptualize what equity means is actually to compare and contrast it with equality.

So this graphic is one of my favorites that I've ever encountered in this space. And I know that there are a lot of other ones out there. But when we are exploring this notion of equity in defining this term of what does equity mean, it's really helpful to remember that both of these terms are grounded in this notion of fairness.

So when we are asking ourselves, is this fair, in both of these situations that are depicted here, we can confidently say yes but for two different reasons because we're utilizing two different lines of thinking here. So in the top row there, for equality, we can say, yes, this situation is fair because we're giving everyone the exact same resources, meaning that equality is a resource-oriented solution. So if I give everyone the exact same bike, presumably that means it has the same price point, the same functionality, et cetera.

But equity is really exciting because it's an outcome-oriented solution, meaning that when we are asking ourselves, is this fair, we confidently say, yes, because we're empowering everyone to achieve a certain outcome by deploying an additional layer of tactical empathy to our problem solving and recognizing, OK, you as an individual-- what do you need to succeed in appreciating your unique needs and differences?

And, once again, these aren't always just visible differences. They can be those invisible aspects, too. So especially for neurodivergent folks or parents or any of these other things, what folks need to succeed and thrive may look differently depending on that individual. So although the youth-sized bike on the far right probably costs far less than the individual who uses a wheelchair on the far left with a hand-gear bike, we can confidently say, once again, that this is fair because we're achieving a certain outcome.

So equality is a resource-oriented solution. Equity is an outcome-oriented solution. And this is really important, especially as you're trying to weave your DEI&B strategies within your respective organizations because although you all work for the same company, you may have vastly different working experiences.

And those differences in the working experience are probably not only informed by the structural components of your workforce, meaning the department, the tenure, the job level, all of those things that are in place, but it's also probably informed by facets of identities in certain populations of your workforce as well. So once again, supporting neurodivergent folks within your organization, trans folks in your organization, folks with chronic illness, whatever may be the case, what they need to thrive within your respective organization may look differently. And that's how you can uphold equity in your strategies.

So I know that's a little bit more of a long-winded explanation of what equity is. But what's really exciting is that this is where these differences in the working experience can be quantified and measured to drive that objectivity and accountability in the efficacy of your DEI&B strategies. So we can talk about that a little bit more in the Q&A if you're interested in exploring how to measure and quantify your DEI&B efforts at a later time. But let's go ahead and keep it moving in our language-setting portion.

All right, the I for Inclusion. So we've gone through diversity, equity. Now we're hitting the inclusion. And here, when we're defining this notion of inclusion, it's so hard not to use the word "including." I know growing up, they always said, you can't use the word in the definition. OK, all right.

So if I were to simplify it for folks, really, it's about knowledge plus action. And what I mean here is that when you fundamentally understand why something is important or how to best support someone, then it's really easy to have that alignment through your actions. And it's that alignment through not only knowing why it's important but doing the work that that is yielding an inclusive product.

And so a few examples of this is if I fundamentally understand where or how my mind is susceptible to unconscious bias and I have that enhanced awareness, all of a sudden, the actions that I take in certain meetings is going to look differently. Or how I lean on psychologically safe best practices that you all will be able to enjoy here later on in the webinar-- that's going to allow me to uphold the inclusion within certain team dynamics.

The same thing goes with understanding why pronouns are important, that it's a powerful mechanism to honor one's gender identity. Sweet. Now it makes so much more sense why I would disclose my own pronouns, for example. And I can take that action. So it's that alignment between knowledge and action that yields formidable inclusion within an organization or otherwise.

And so when there's a misalignment, though, of, hey, I took action, but I didn't understand the why-- like, you probably know a few folks who have their pronouns listed but maybe don't know why it's important. Well, then that's when you can get into the performative space, where you're just kind of doing it to check a box or to go through the motions. Because you know it's important, but you don't understand why. So taking the time to understand why then yields that alignment, which is so, so, so critical in this line of work. Karyn, what did I miss here?

I'll just quickly add, it is so hard to define this without using the word "including." But I want to encourage everyone to think on the subtle nuance between including and true inclusion. Because simply including someone-- for example, I might be in the room or I might have a seat at the table. But if there isn't true inclusion, if there isn't a safe-- if I don't feel safe speaking up, then it doesn't really matter that I'm there. I'm just sort of like the token person. So think about the difference a little bit between simply including and a culture of inclusion.

All right. So let's move on to the B for Belonging. B for Belonging is the output of a truly inclusive culture. This really puts the individual, the human, at the very center. It's really all about that feeling and the belief that you have that you're not only meant to be there, but that you are able to thrive there.

So zooming out a little bit in a bigger context, we just want to acknowledge this is a conversation that's evolving in real time. We've seen other folks add a J for Justice. We've seen folks add an A for either Accessibility or Accountability.

For Megan and I, we have adopted "belonging" in our practice because it resonates with us so much. It's a core human need. And it is measurable. So we would be really excited to see all of you advocate for measuring sense of belonging on your teams and at your companies and hopefully to see levels of belonging increase over time. All right, Megan. Are we ready to move on to psychological safety?

Yes, absolutely. And I love the Q&A questions coming in-- or the questions coming in that we'll be able to get addressed in the Q&A. So please keep dropping in your thoughts. We love geeking out on all of this material. And speaking of geeking out, this is one of my favorite aspects of working in this space, psychological safety.



So before revealing the definition to you all, though, it's really important to identify, what is the main challenge that we're trying to solve through talking about or getting this foundational knowledge of what psychological safety is and its value? So the biggest thing that gets in the way of psychological safety or being able to foster it within an organization is this idea called impression management.

So we can all imagine, if I were to ask you in front of you, raise your hand if you love feeling incompetent, ignorant, negative, or intrusive, no one's hand would be up. It would be crickets in the room. Totally understandable, right? And impression management is really, really powerful.

But this is something that we've cultivated and have been socialized, probably really early on in our childhood, once we were able to discern what is socially acceptable and what isn't, because connection is so important and a fundamental human need. So if we want to think that our ability to connect with others is threatened, whew, yeah, that's going to make us be really fearful on what we display aspects of ourselves and curating a certain experience of us to other people so that we can try and shape their impression of us.

And it's really important to recognize that impression management and psychological safety are negatively related to one another, meaning when psychological safety is really high, impression management is low. But when impression management is high, psychological safety is really low.

And so now that we have a pretty good idea of the main challenge we are trying to solve utilizing psychological safety, mitigating impression management, let's go ahead and view how powerful impression management is through a really famous psych study called the Asch experiment. So there are going to be three different variations in this experiment. I want you all, as you are watching this video clip, think through, how might this apply to work dynamics? And would I have the same behavior in this situation, too? So all right, here we go. Enjoy.

[VIDEO PLAYBACK]

- The experiment you'll be taking part in today involves the perception of lengths of lines. As you can see here, I have a number of cards. And on each card, there are several lines. Your task is a very simple one. You're to look at the line on the left and determine which of the three lines on the right is equal to it in length. All right, we'll proceed in this order. You'll give your answer--

- Only one of the people in the group is a real subject, the fifth person with the white T-shirt. The others are confederates of the experimenter and have been told to give wrong answers on some of the trials. The experiment begins uneventfully as subjects give their judgments.

- Two.

- Two.

- Two.

- Two.

- Two.

- Three.

- Three.

- Three.

- Three.

- Three.

- But on the third trial, something happens.

- Two.

- Two.

- Two.

- Two.

- Two.

- The subject denies the evidence of his own eyes and yields to group influence. Asch found subjects went along with the group on 37% of the critical trials. But he found through interviews that they went along with the group for different reasons.

- One.

- One.

- They must be right. There are four of them and one of me.

One.

- This subject's yielding is based on a distortion of his judgment. He genuinely believes that the group is correct.

- One.

- One.

- One.

- Two.

- One.

- Two.

- Two.

- Two.

- I know they're wrong, but should I make waves?

Two.

- In this case, the subject knows he is right but goes along to avoid the discomfort of disagreeing with the group. Here, the distortion is at the level of his response.

- Two.

- Two.

- Two.

- Two.

- In the previous experiment, the naive subject stood alone against the group. In this variation, Asch gave the naive subject a partner, here seated in the third position, who also gives the correct response.

- One.

- One.

- Two.

- One.

- Two.

- With a partner, yielding drops to only 5% of the critical trials, compared to 37% without a partner. Although subjects report warmth and good feeling toward the partner, they typically deny that he played a role in their own independence. The partnership variation shows that much of the power of the group came not merely from its numbers but from the unanimity of its opposition. When that unanimity is punctured, the group's power is greatly reduced.

Sometimes we go along with the group because what they say convinces us they are right. This is called informational conformity. But sometimes we conform because we are apprehensive that the group will disapprove if we are deviant. This is called normative conformity.

The strength of the normative factor is shown in another variation carried out by Asch. In this variation, the subject is told that because he had arrived late, he would have to write his answers. Subjects in this private response experiment are exposed to the same amount of misleading information as other subjects, but they are immune from any possible criticism by the group.

- One.

- One.

- One.

- And this enormously reduces the pressure to conform. Conformity drops by 2/3. Asch's experiment is a classic. It reveals how people will deny what they see and submit to group pressure. It allows us not only to observe conformity, but to study the conditions that increase or reduce its occurrence.

[END PLAYBACK]

All right. All right. So besides the groovy apparel that you all noticed-- and apologies about the video and sound maybe not aligning as well as we intended-- you probably noticed three different outcomes in this Asch experiment, which is really quite powerful findings. And I know some of us may be thinking, oh, what would happen if there was a different group of folks within the room? It feels maybe a little outdated.

I want to show you that one, this has been replicated many times. And then two, even with different populations, we can still see the same effects occurring, which are without a partner in the room, yielding, or saying the incorrect answer because of the pressure of the situation, happened 37% of the time. But with a partner in the room, you all probably have noticed that it drops down to 5%.

What's really interesting there, though, is that those folks who weren't susceptible to voicing the incorrect answer or anything like that when the partner was in the room didn't attribute their ability to voice the right answer to the partner at all, which was really, really fascinating. So all this to say is that if you are in the room to help puncture or mitigate the impact of impression management, even voicing a half-baked idea can be a really powerful act in fostering greater psychological safety.

That might sound like, hey, I know this is a half-baked idea. Or what if we-- or I'm probably missing something. And you can invite that collaborative effort to pick apart whatever may be the goal that you all are trying to achieve or how you're trying to problem solve that challenge.

But what's also really interesting is if you happen to be a people leader or someone who facilitates meetings on a regular basis, really consider, how is it that you solicit thoughtfulness from others? So, once again, without the pressure to speak, conformity dropped by 2/3.

So being able to have that written response or have people think through what you all want to discuss in a meeting prior or maybe the night before, and then come together to collaborate instead of just putting folks on the spot-- that's a really, really great idea and method in upholding the level of cognitive diversity or really unlocking the magic of a cognitively diverse team. Karyn, did I miss anything else here? All right, wonderful.

OK. So arguably the moment you all have been waiting for, now that we've talked about the challenge and power of impression management let's go ahead and shift our thinking to, what is psychological safety? So psychological safety is a shared belief held by members of the team that the team is safe for interpersonal risk taking. And there are a few key phrases that I want you all to really consider in this definition.

The first is a shared belief. This is really important because it's not simply about the majority of folks within the team feeling psychologically safe. Everyone needs to feel psychologically safe in order to really unlock the magic of a cognitively diverse team. Remember, if we never hear from the folks who keep their ketchup in the pantry, we'll never have that innovative idea of the spicy mayo. So how is it that we can make sure that it's safe for everyone to contribute their line of thinking or to be able to spot the error, et cetera?

The next aspect is this interpersonal risk taking. And this is really important because psychological safety is a little bit different than just a safe space. And I know that we probably heard of a safe space before. Folks are like, oh, this is a safe space. You can say anything.

Well, psychological safety takes it a step further because a safe space implies that that safety only resides within a moment of time or within a specific location. But, really, every interaction that we have is either an opportunity to bolster the level of psychological safety or diminish the level of psychological safety. So whether it's a high-stakes strategic planning meeting or a social happy hour gathering, every time we interact, in order for me to uphold the integrity of our psychological contract, every touchpoint matters in our interactions.

All right. So now that we have a clear understanding of what psychological safety is, we're interested to get your thoughts on this poll. Once again, this poll is anonymous. But, really, we're interested in seeing, how frequently or how often do you feel psychologically safe at work?

So, Piper, whenever you have a moment to be able to push that poll out for folks, we're interested to see the breakdown here. We'll give folks maybe-- Karyn, what do you think? 30, 40 seconds?

Sure.

Cool. Enough time for me to sip on some water.

Oh, and I see that there's a question in the Q&A too about-- actually, I'll get to that later. All right. So here are the findings. Awesome. Wonderful.

So it looks like 2% of us always-- that's really exciting to hear. The majority of folks are with most of the time. And then it does a nice bell curve from there. So, arguably, if that is the case, the last section that we go through in really identifying those actionable steps that we can take together within your organization-- that's going to be so powerful so that you can increase the frequency in which you enjoy psychological safety.

All right. So now that we know what psychological safety is, we're really excited to demonstrate its value and why we love the geek out on this stuff. So on this slide, you can see a few thought leaders in this space who have extensively studied psychological safety.

So the first is Amy Edmondson, Dr. Amy Edmondson. And, admittedly, she is one of my heroes because she popularized this term, "psychological safety." And it really became abundantly clear that psychological safety helps yield optimal performance, as her research was done in a medical setting, where she was able to correlate the level of psychological safety to the number of mistakes made within a hospital setting.

So this makes a lot of sense, especially when maybe an attending nurse can clarify a certain dosage or prescription with the attending physician. All of a sudden, that yielded higher patient outcome. So it's really, really exciting to see how psychological safety is not only nice for organizations, but it's a necessity. It can really save lives depending on the industry and, arguably, even the research of a lot of medical professionals as well.

Daniel Coyle extensively studied how psychological safety is applied in a lot of different team settings-- So not only professional athletes, soldiers or military folks, but also even thieves, a group of thieves. Psychological safety was the number-one factor that yielded team success there. And so if you are interested in learning about that, going to *The Culture Code* would be really exciting for you to surface those stories and those learnings as well.

And it's really in Project Aristotle, conducted by Google, where we can see how psychological safety was the number-one [INAUDIBLE] for team success. So researchers were determined to find out, why is it that certain teams succeed and certain teams fail? And originally, their hypothesis was grounded in this idea that, oh, it's probably who is on a team that matters most. The people who are most experienced, most knowledgeable probably get alongside one another. That probably yields success on a team.

But time and time again with this hypothesis, that wasn't correct. It wasn't until they modified their hypothesis that they were able to get some predictive validity on determining which teams would succeed and which teams would fail. And this was largely because when they modified their hypothesis to consider not who is on a team that matters, but it's how they work alongside one another-- it's that how piece-- that that's where they were able to find two really exciting behavioral components of psychological safety, that when they are both present, that predicted team success.

So the first is equality in conversational turn taking. And then the next is ostentatious listening, so ostentatious listening meaning like active listening on steroids, if you will, really nodding your head, repeating back the phrases that folks are saying, making sure your laptop is closed if you're in person, just being fully present. It's a really powerful way to make someone feel heard and like you're truly collaborating.

So these two behavioral components that researchers deemed as psychological safety, once again, yielded this really exciting finding that psychological safety is the single greatest correlate with a group's success. And we saw that in Dr. Amy Edmondson's work and all the proof points that Daniel Coyle outlined in his *Culture Code* book.

All right. But there may be folks who are skeptical of the power of psychological safety and the value of it. And if you are, you're probably thinking something along these lines. But I want to show you all how psychological safety and accountability are actually not mutually exclusive.

All right. So here, this aligns nicely with the work that Dr. Amy Edmondson had done, where she outlines, with these two variables considered, how is it that folks fall in these different performance zones? So I want you all to take an opportunity to think about your working experience, your whole career working experience. And think about the time that you were in that growth and development zone, where both psychological safety was high and accountability was high.

You'll probably remember that that's when you had a tremendous amount of support, not only by teammates, but probably a really fantastic leader, where they pushed you to persevere through those self-perceived thresholds. And that's where you were able to learn and really grow in that role. They were really empathetic. They really empowered you. They listened. They understood.

Whereas maybe with leaders that you've worked with in the past, more difficult leaders, if you have ever been in an anxiety or apathy or complacency zones, yeah, you were probably working with a difficult leader at that time. Maybe they were micromanaging. Maybe they didn't trust the results. Or maybe they were only about the results and not really about supporting you as an individual. And this makes a lot of sense, right? Sorry. Catching my breath here. I get excited about this stuff.



What's really interesting about the anxiety zone-- so when psychological safety is low, but accountability is high-- some leaders may think that this is success. I'm getting the best performance from folks. But it's really important to note that this isn't sustainable in the long run. This is when folks are going to burn out or maybe look for another job, et cetera.

Those leaders that have folks operating in a complacency zone, apathy zone, or anxiety zone may intentionally or unintentionally create environments of low psychological safety because they tend to want to avoid criticism and dissent. So just important to note that it's not always about-- sorry, I'm losing my train of thought right now. So having a really empowering leader who is able to foster great psychological safety is able to yield great performance.

And we can see that this is where we want to be because there are so many benefits in having folks operating in the growth and development zone. This is going to lead to higher engagement, better employee retention, all of the benefits that you can see listed here, whereas when you have folks operating in other zones, it's pretty costly, especially in this environment when we're considering how is it that we can foster a more inclusive and equitable working experience.

All right. So with all of these foundations in mind, the language setting, the definition and value of psychological safety, now let's talk about how we can take action from all of this knowledge. OK. So allyship was actually dictionary.com's word of the year last year in 2021, a lot of folks searching for what it means and how to take action.

So at its heart, allyship is really all about how we show up for ourselves and also for each other. There are so many different scenarios and different ways, big and small, in which every single one of us can be an ally. So we want to share the framework for how we think about allyship.

From an organizational standpoint, there are four levels of allyship. And they all build upon each other really nicely. So we'll start at the top. Individual allyship-- that's all about looking inward, being introspective, pursuing your own learning and growth. Interpersonal allyship extends to group dynamics, whether it's a one-on-one or a one-to-many, like a meeting or brainstorm at work, for instance.

Structural allyship has to do with looking at your organizational processes, your procedures, your policies, all of that with a lens of inclusion and equity. And I promise you, there is nothing that can't be improved if you commit to doing this periodically.

And then, finally, building from the individual to interpersonal to structural culminates in cultural allyship. That's where new habits are being built and language is being used. Norms and beliefs are really shifting in a way where working this way, with inclusion and equity in mind, eventually, it's just the way we do things. That's our dream, where these efforts are no longer labeled a DEI&B thing. And it's just the way we work.

So we often find that, for folks who are asking themselves, what can I do, this framework is a really helpful way to approach it in a way that doesn't feel overwhelming. So we'll show you what we mean in a moment.

All right. So I want to pause here for a moment on this notion of an equity pause. This is one of the very best tools that we can teach you to really operationalize everything that we're going over today. So this quote below frames it very nicely. It is really important to recognize that none of us are in control of our first thoughts. Those reflect our myriad of unconscious biases, the wiring and glitches in our brains that we don't have any control over, and that's OK.

But we sure can pause and be responsible for our second thought, and from there our first action. So there's a lot of power in that pause. And that's the equity pause moment if we can ask the right questions in that moment. After all, allyship stems from intentionality. And that intentionality can be practiced and even embedded into your culture and become second nature to how you work.

So when this happens it really allows us to mitigate short-term gains that truly come at the expense of long-term benefits, meaning if you're making a quick snap decision, most likely from your first thought, it can feel like a quick win in the moment. But was it really the right decision?

Taking that equity pause moment and then making a decision, you might still wind up making the same decision, or maybe not. It will give you greater clarity and confidence in your level of decision making. So in the following section, you'll notice as we go through the four levels of allyship we will share relevant equity pause questions along with the specific actions that you can take.

All right. So let's start by taking a look at what this looks like at the individual level of allyship. Now, remember, that's looking inward, pursuing your own learning and growth. So when you're doing that, some example powerful equity pause questions that you could ask yourself in a relevant work scenario could be, what blind spots and biases might be showing up right now?

Let's say, in an interview setting, why do I have a preference for this person? Could it be the affinity bias? Maybe we went to the same school or we're from the same hometown. Is that a good enough reason to hire someone? Or should I pause on that for a moment and consider, beyond the fact that I feel affinity for this person, are they a truly great culture add to our team, as opposed to someone that I'd like to go have lunch with?

So these are just a couple of examples. And, truly, the more you learn about your own biases, the better you'll be able to make a habit of this. And so that's why our first action is really to encourage you to take a few of the implicit associations tests. These are online. They're free and really immensely surprising and insightful what you might learn about your own biases and assumptions.

For the sake of time-- we know there's a lot on all of these slides because we want to equip you with as many actionable items as possible-- we will only highlight one or two of them on each level. And we're going to share the entire slide deck with you all afterwards so that you can have everything for reference. And we're more than happy to answer questions as well.

So want to bring it to life a little bit more, a really wonderful tactic that you can use to help ground your individual allyship is something called empathy mapping. So this comes from the world of human-centered design. But it is, really simply, considering each person in the room, what they might be thinking, saying, doing, and feeling.

So if you're the only woman in the room, for instance, the only person of color in the room, what might be motivating you behind the scenes? Or what if you're the HIPPO in the room? HIPPO stands for Highest Paid Person's Opinion. And we know there are a lot of biases that kick in when the HIPPO speaks up first.

But really consider, from your own perspective-- or you can practice as a team as well-- what is this contributor type in this particular situation thinking, doing, saying, and feeling? And hopefully it will give you a different perspective and really help inform how you might use some of the actions that we're going to be sharing today.

All right. So now we are making our way to the next level. And it's activating our interpersonal allyship. So on the left-hand side, here are a few compelling equity pause questions to ask yourself to guide your line of thinking of, how is it that my allyship can be unlocked at the interpersonal level?

And it's especially that last question of, who are we not hearing from and why, that nicely addresses a few of the Q&A questions that have been populating about, how is it that you can be equitable? Who gets to define what success or that determine-- or the outcome for that individual? Is it the individual? Is it the organization? How do you navigate that negotiation, if you will?

And so that's why this level of allyship is really, really compelling. And so if you're able to pause and say, OK, hang on, who determines what success looks like here, now, all of a sudden, you can have the confidence that you are upholding an equitable approach as you go through your collaborative efforts moving forward.

So a few actions that I want to highlight-- I know we can't touch upon all of them. But you'll notice that we pulled in a few of those words there from earlier, the two behavioral components of psychological safety, so that equality and conversational turn taking and ostentatious listening. And a way to make space for folks so that you can uphold or strike that balance of equality and conversational turn taking-- here are a few tactics that I want to highlight real quick.

So the first is inviting expertise. So that might sound like, hey, Karyn, given your wealth of experience in product development, your thoughts would be really, really valuable here. Or giving credit-- that might sound like, hey, Piper, I really like that idea. I know that nicely builds upon what Karyn said last week. Would you like to build upon that idea moving forward?

The seven-second rule-- especially if you're like me and you love to pipe up with your responses all the time right away when a question is asked to a group, wait seven seconds. Maybe that's tapping your foot seven times or just counting in your head.

Sometimes I make it to only five seconds, and I'll take that as a win. Because when I hold back when I typically speak up often, that allows someone else to contribute their line of thinking. And although I like to think I'm right 99.8% of the time, maybe not always the right way to go about a collaboration with everyone in the room.

And then, once again, building upon the Asch experiment, be that partner in the room. How is it that you can maybe express some vulnerability, not because you're vulnerable in a reckless way, but because you have that calculated approach so that you can give permission for other people to have their line of thinking amplified or voiced or their concern voiced or whatever may be the case? So those small dynamics in, once again, how we work is a really powerful way to foster greater psychological safety.

Then for just one last tactic, microcompassions. Microaggressions are something that we always want to avoid. We found in our experience in our line of work that it's easier to embrace and uphold things of knowing what success look like. So microcompassion is just flipping microaggressions on its head and really saying, OK, what are those small, subtle ways in which I can make someone feel included and that sense of belonging rather than perpetuate that sense of otherness? And we can go through a whole deep dive on microaggressions and microcompassions at another time, but something to keep in mind.

So, once again, here's a few key phrases or ways to language how you can uphold psychological safety at the interpersonal level. So we'd encourage everyone on this webinar to follow up with the slides and be able to review this material. And this is really great language for when you're collaborating with each other. But on this next slide, this is going to be a really great way and framework to lean on or just having that intentionality of, when is it that we're providing coaching moments for each other?

And you'll notice this is a framework that we like to use. But there are so many other frameworks in how you can have feedback conversations or inclusionary feedback conversations. But you'll notice that psychological safety fuels the success or the efficacy of this entire process-- so not only the person giving the feedback, but also the person receiving that feedback to make sure what is communicated is internalized and then utilized moving forward.

All right. So moving from individual and interpersonal to structural, remember, again, this has to do with our organizational processes and policies with that new lens of inclusion and equity and everything-- can be absolutely improved this way. So a couple of example equity pause questions-- is it performative? If we put photos of all of our employees of color on our Careers page, is it performative?

Who is it really for? If we really have genuine efforts in place, then that's not performative. Let's go for it. But if we don't and we're just trying to show simply that we have diversity, not that we're committed to fostering inclusion or retention, then, yes, it is performative. So do we have all the right people in the room? Who gets to define success? A lot of example questions that we can ask at this level.

And then in terms of actions, normalizing practicing equity pauses together, really making sure that you have clear goals and metrics in place so that you know what you're working toward and why. And if your organization already has a DEI program in place or even dedicated headcount, if you survey around the employee working experience, if you have ERGs, if efforts like these are nonperformative and genuine, then all of those are examples of structural allyship.

So we want to go a little bit more in depth on what structural allyship can look like in everyday scenarios if we were to reimagine our meeting culture. So one really popular example, tied to what Megan was just sharing around turning from including someone to true inclusion, is to conduct a meeting audit.

So over the course of a meeting, just make a note of who's attending, and place a check mark whenever someone speaks up. And then you might be really surprised who speaks a lot, who never speaks at all. What can I do with whatever formal or informal powers I hold? How can I even that out a little bit and encourage some folks to speak up?

All right. So we've made our journey from individual allyship to interpersonal to structural. And now we are at the base of that cultural level. And here, this is where it's really exciting opportunity to, as an organization, really have that intentionality of, OK, why is all this important to us? How can we make it authentic? And then how can we make it sustainable for the long run and just simply our mindset around approaching this work?

So oftentimes, when we see that cultural shift, it's really embracing this idea of the curb cut effect of when we can be really intentional supporting maybe the most marginalized folk, not most-- most marginalized are the folks that we can really want to support further-- that it actually benefits everyone. It's not a zero-sum game, meaning that more support for you means less support for someone else. No, that couldn't be further from the truth.

And, actually, this is where we can see the benefits. So although curb cuts were created to better support folks who are using wheelchairs, it also benefits pedestrians, delivery folks, folks with strollers, skateboarders, et cetera. So it really is going to have that ripple effect benefiting everyone.

And a few actions that you can take in being able to unlock your cultural allyship is to really shift the mindset of "oh, we failed" with "we learned." Or we're not doing this work-- we're doing this work with you, not for you.

Once again, embracing this idea of a culture add rather than a culture fit. Just because we've done something a certain way, it doesn't actually mean that maybe it's the most thoughtful or most intentional way of doing it in the future. What if we integrated someone on our team that would allow us to think differently and really have that exciting innovation? So just a few a-ha moments to help shift the mindset of how you can approach this work as an organization, weaving it into the fabric of your DNA.

And a really great example of what this might look like is to say, OK, as an organization, culturally, we want to uphold gender inclusivity. OK. Well, now we can see that when we have this approach of saying, what does it look like at the individual and a personal and structural level, that it transforms the cultural level as well.

So a few coaching points here-- I recognize that we are getting to almost about time. For your individual allyship, if you wanted to uphold a greater intentionality for gender inclusivity, practice using they/them pronouns with your pets. I know that sounds really unexpected. But it's a really exciting way to create new rewirements in your mind so that you can be able to be more natural in using a lot of those and using that in your daily practice. But, once again, you can see here that it's the culmination of these intentional efforts that makes that cultural shift.

Awesome. And I'll just note that for any questions that we don't have time to answer, Megan and I are really committed to answering them over email. And Piper can share them out afterwards as well so that everybody can see our responses.

So we're getting close to the end, promise. These conversations can be hard. They're made easier by all of us speaking the same language and being collectively committed to building up psychological safety. So remember, uncomfortable is OK. Uncomfortable does not have to equal unsafe.

So we really want to encourage you all to move from calling out, which we see so much these days, to more of a culture of calling in, moving from publicly shaming to learning moments that are centered around respect and reflection and really giving a lot, plenty of grace to each other and really having conversations and moments, moment by moment, that builds psychological safety and upholds the integrity of that psychological contract you have with each other, as opposed to turning it into an environment where everybody is scared all the time to say the wrong thing. Because you will say the wrong thing, and that's OK.

And we just want to stress again there is no perfection in this space. It is not humanly possible. And so instead, we encourage you all to strive for connection. And that's really the best way we can all be showing up for each other in these times.

Wonderful. Awesome. So as we voiced earlier of what we aim to achieve here together, I want to give you all a summary of what is it that we should be able to do after completing this course and then give you a little glimpse or snapshot of something that you can even save on your desktop or later to foster greater psychological safety within your respective organization.

So, once again, through our time together, we've been able to define what DEI&B means. We know what psychological safety is, why it's so valuable. And then we have the structure and clarity of how to action our allyship, not only at the individual level, interpersonal level, structural, and cultural level.

So pretty robust webinar that you all completed here today. So we just want to applaud you in your efforts. And know that your employers are so lucky to have you. Scaling all of this, this is what the DEI&B is really about-- so rallying aside one another and just fostering greater intentionality so that we can enjoy a more inclusive and equitable working experience.

Here, this psychological safety toolkit is something that I save on my desktop as a constant reminder that I can refer to back and forth of different strategies to try out to figure out what works best for me or in which situation. So please, please, please, take the time to consider, how is it that you can weave a lot of these strategies within your daily routines and practices?

And from the bottom of our hearts, we are so honored to be able to partner with SWE. Thank you all so much. And I'm going to hand off the next slide to Piper.

Yes. And we're happy to stick around and answer questions as well.

Hi, thank you. This is Piper Kruse from HQ again. I want to thank Megan and Karyn for that wonderful presentation. We are running out of time, but I would like to get a couple of questions answered just so we can have questions answered.

Before we begin the Q&A, I want to remind you about the survey. Please complete it after the session. We strive to create programming that suits your needs. And one way we do that is by learning what we can through these surveys. So please take the time to fill that out, and really appreciate it.



Let's get one or two questions in. If we don't get to your question today, I will send these questions to Megan and Karyn, and they will respond. And I will post them underneath the course, either as a link or a document.

So one of the questions was, I struggle with the line between accountability and anxiety. People react to accountability differently. So some might find it constructive, while others take it to heart. How do you find the line?

Excellent question, whomever raised it. This is awesome. This is an opportunity to unlock your equitable leadership, meaning that prior to trying-- or all of these tactics that you may have in mind about how you uphold that level of accountability, ask someone that you collaborate with, would this work for you? How do you like to be held accountable?

And have it as a collaboration in determining what success looks like, what type of markers they would like to check in on, that feedback of, yeah, I am doing a good job, or here's how I'm going to represent that my performance is hitting the mark, whatever may be the case. Karyn, what did I miss there? Anything else to add?

No, yeah, absolutely. This absolutely speaks to taking an equity-based approach because everybody does land somewhere different on the line, and not just around accountability and anxiety, but how they like to receive feedback, how they like to brainstorm, all sorts of different things.

And so one of the practical tactics that we've seen partners adopt is having employees fill out an employee user manual or a bio deck and really help you understand how they process information best, how they like to communicate, how they like to receive constructive criticism, small nuances like, I really need to be walking and moving my body while you're giving me feedback, or I really would prefer to be in person. All of those can help you better understand how to work with and approach each other. And everyone's different, and that's the commitment it takes to work with equity in mind.

And something to bring up-- if you are a people manager or leader or something to weave into one-on-one meetings, have people leaders really intentional about the communication strategy or how accountability looks like. So is it a Slack check-in first thing in the morning? Is it a one-on-one standup in the morning? Yeah, ask them how they would like to be held accountable, and they're going to feel so empowered.

And if they don't know, great. Try out different strategies. Just because you do it one way, it doesn't mean you're married to that way the whole time in your collaborative efforts. And it's really about adaptive capacity. But that's going to foster so much psychological safety because we're all stumbling through it together in how to best work alongside one another.

Awesome. Thank you. Two more questions I think we have time for. One is, I love the comment about using they/them pronouns for your pets. What do you suggest for disability inclusion specifically for neurodivergent, ADHD, autism?

Yeah. I think one way at the interpersonal level-- so we mapped out what gender inclusivity looks like at all the different levels. Individually, maybe it's considering a thought experiment of, oh, yeah, I know that I learn best through auditory input or maybe visuals or when I'm able to write things down or something. Consider your learning style, and consider how it might vary from all these other individuals.

What's really interesting about that is that it's going to reveal that we are all neurologically programmed differently. Or how we integrate information looks differently for each person. So once you notice like, oh, yeah, this is how I best use or this is how I best learn, ask your colleagues. Hey, how is it that you learn best? Or what's your learning style?

And then you're going to see so many different ways of how you can best show up for one another in that regard. And then it's going to really turn on this idea of, oh, I can be really more thoughtful about who I'm engaging with or who I'm collaborating with and how we complete this project together. Yeah. What else?

Yeah. This is something that we really like to measure as well when we conduct employee engagement and inclusion surveys. And we're able to understand, when we stratify the data, whether folks who are neurodivergent within an organization are feeling supported, whether they feel like they belong, whether they feel like they're able to take risks, et cetera. And as an organization, there's a lot that you all can do to be allies.

Quick example, on the interpersonal level, we know that in interviews it might be really important to start your interview with, are you comfortable? Most folks might say, yeah, I'm totally comfortable, totally good. But if an individual is having trouble with the flashing lights, the lighting, anything else in the room, that's an opportunity for them to speak up and share something about themselves and to ask for a different setup, perhaps, and so appreciated.

At a structural level, a lot of organizations have ERGs around neural divergence and have hiring and recruiting programs specifically around that because, again, we want people who think differently. It's a real value to the organization. And so there's lots of exciting efforts happening around that now.

Excellent. And then one more question, then we will wrap it up. Oh, this one-- what do I do to help myself if I don't feel psychologically safe? How can I tell management I don't and essentially stand up for myself?

Oh, gosh. First of all, so sorry that you're feeling this way. There's so much power here in speaking the same language and having your management understand how important psychological safety is. And so often, we find that after this foundational layer of knowledge is in place, then folks feel safer saying, I don't feel safe.

Chances are you don't have perfect, optimal levels of psychological safety because it really varies from group to group, situation to situation. But being able to say, hey, I don't feel a high level of psychological safety with you right now, but I know that we're collectively committed to this, and so I'm going to take a risk and share this-- there's so much power in that.

And chances are management sometimes don't realize that everybody has to feel safe. It's not just the few. It's not just them that needs to feel safe, but everyone needs to feel safe for this to really work collectively.

And then sometimes management will admit to not feeling psychologically safe either. We work with leaders all the time who are really scared when they're talking to their direct reports because they feel like they can't do anything right. And so it really creates this kind of vulnerability in the relationship that then, with each subsequent interaction, can work to build up that level of psychological safety. What do you want to add, Megan?

Yeah. And then if you are an employer or someone who is able to shape people strategy, being able to proactively assess the levels of psychological safety because it is something that can be measured and quantified-- if you're doing that as not to say, oh, who's problematic or who's really-- yeah, just navigating the power dynamics or whatever it may be, if you are able to quantify the health of your workforce, then, proactively, you can equip these people managers and these leaders to be able to try new practices or different methodologies in how you can uphold psychological safety.

And it's not always just serious stuff. It could also be really playful, like PowerPoint karaoke. And for those of you who don't know what PowerPoint karaoke is, it's where you can-- it's almost like improv comedy, where you take five seconds per slide, maybe six slides total. And you outline or you think-- you provide a presentation that seemingly does not make any sense, like just random slides compiled together.

But it's being able to laugh and have that vulnerability that builds psychological safety. So if you are trying to advocate for yourself-- and maybe you don't feel comfortable saying, hey, I don't feel psychologically safe, after even giving all the proof points of why psychological safety is so valuable, you can try and implement these new ways of how you work to slowly create that change. So you don't have to say it directly.

But try and find and celebrate those moments to be a little bit more playful together where it doesn't have to feel so high stakes. And slowly but surely, the culmination of those moments will make a difference in being able to feel better there. Yeah. Karyn, what else would you add?

That's so beautifully said. That just reminded me, psychological safety is not a top-down thing. It's not something that leaders can give onto people. It really can come from every which way. And everybody is responsible for cultivating and bolstering psychological safety with every interaction.

And so a lot of the items in the toolkit, the actions in the toolkit-- those are actions that are really positively contagious. When you lead by example, no matter where you sit in an organization, when you make space for others to contribute, like those moments when you check in on a colleague, those moments become so positively contagious that others will follow your example.

It also reminds me of that notion of not everyone on the team is a captain, necessarily. You don't have to have a captain armband to be a leader. So please, please, please, everyone who's attending this webinar, embrace your leadership through your allyship and just modeling this behavior yourself and embracing your DEI&B journeys as well.

Perfect. Unfortunately, that is all the time we have for questions today. Just as a reminder, today's webinar has been accredited with 0.1 CEU slash 1 PDH. After watching this webinar all the way through, please go back to the course. Take that knowledge check. Receive an 80%, and you'll get that credit. I'd like to thank everyone for tuning in and attending this webinar. A big thank you goes out to Megan and Karyn. Thank you, our wonderful speakers.

You can always email [learning@swe.org](mailto:learning@swe.org) if you have questions for the speaker or need any support for this webinar. The on-demand version of this will be made available on the Advanced Learning Center within 48 hours. If you learned from and enjoyed the session-- and I hope you did-- you can find more professional development at [advancedlearning.swe.org](http://advancedlearning.swe.org).

I'd like to wish everyone a nice rest of your day. Thank you. Bye. If only I know how to end it. There we go. Bye.