

# Modern Belonging

Your guide to implementing integrative, evidence-based strategies that promote employee well-being, inclusion, and belonging within your organization.



# What Is Modern Belonging?

Modern Belonging is the belief that helping employees feel like they *belong* is crucial for employee well-being, productivity, and retention in the modern workplace.

Belonging is not only a psychological need but a connection that empowers employees of diverse backgrounds to show up authentically in the workplace, resulting in greater engagement, creativity, and productivity. Employees need to feel like they belong to thrive at work, and there are ways you can help them show up as their best selves day after day.

This guide equips you with evidence-based strategies to build a thoughtful Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Belonging (DEIB) strategy that prioritizes belonging and employee well-being within the workplace.

## We'll cover:

- Why the “B” in DEIB matters: The relationship between mental health and belonging
- How to build belonging into your organizational culture and DEIB strategy
- Modern Health resources for you and your employees



# DEIB Terms to Know

## Belonging

Feeling psychologically safe, accepted, and welcomed for all aspects of your identity in a group setting. In the context of the workplace, belonging can also relate to “feeling seen for your unique contributions, connected to your coworkers, supported in your daily work and career development, and proud of your organization’s values and purpose.” ([Kennedy, 2021](#))

## Community

A group of people with diverse characteristics who are linked by social ties, share common perspectives, and engage in joint action in geographic locations or virtual spaces. Examples of communities include cities, workplaces, groups or clubs, and online social networks. (MacQueen et al., 2001)

## Cultural Humility

A core component of multicultural orientation which involves [inward self-awareness, outward valuing of others, and upward growth](#) as a means to appreciate and respect differing cultural experiences.

## Culturally Centered Care

The [integration of culture into mental health care delivery](#), guided by four key concepts: 1) Awareness of culture 2) Knowledge of cultural aspects of an individual, group, couple, family, community, or organizational experience 3) Understanding of the difference between culture and pathology and 4) Ability to integrate these concepts into service delivery.

## Culture

Beliefs and values that influence how we think, speak, behave, and interact. We experience different cultures based on our identities at the individual, team, organizational, and societal levels. These shape how we interpret and experience others.

## Diversity

Representation or composition of social identity groups, including race or ethnicity, gender identity, sexual orientation, geography, age, language, disability, mental well-being status, socioeconomic status, religion, and other dimensions.

## Equality

Each individual or group of people has the same resources or opportunities and is not unjustifiably discriminated against based on identity, including gender, age, sexual orientation, origin, caste or class, income or property, language, religion, convictions, opinions, health, or disability.

## Inclusion

Cultivating [an environment of belonging](#) by acknowledging, welcoming, and accepting different approaches, styles, perspectives, and experiences.

## Intersectionality

A [critical lens](#) used to examine interlocking forms of power and oppression, and to acknowledge the ways in which oppressive structures (e.g., racism and patriarchy) work together to sustain one another.

## Mental Health Equity

The state in which everyone has a fair and just opportunity to reach their [highest level of mental health and emotional well-being](#). It also involves the ability for all people to access quality, affordable, and culturally centered mental health resources and services.

## Psychological Safety

An environment in which employees trust that team members will not judge them negatively for offering an opinion, proposing an idea, or expressing their individuality.

## Social Identity

A person’s affiliation with and feelings of connection to other members of a sociocultural group (such as age, disability, religion, gender, ethnicity, race, gender expression, socioeconomic status, and tribe). People have multiple social identities, which can overlap. The social identity most important to us can change depending on the environment. For example, at church, religious identity may be most important, but at work, age may play a larger role in how a person identifies.





### Retention of Diverse Talent

*"I feel valued and can see myself staying at this organization."*

### Belonging

*"I feel seen and welcomed for all aspects of my identity at work."*

### Psychological Safety

*"I feel like I can safely express my identities and ideas at work."*

### Mental Health

*"Psychological safety is a cornerstone to my mental well-being."*

## Mental Health Is a Must for DEIB

If you're not focusing on mental health, you're probably not fully supporting your DEIB goals.

### Belonging Links DEIB and Mental Health

The past few years have shined a spotlight on some of the ways that DEIB and mental health are interdependent. Events like the rise in anti-Asian violence and Black Lives Matter protests catalyzed many employers to take action to support mental health and DEIB separately. But how do organizations address these issues together in a meaningful way?

The first step is recognizing that you cannot meaningfully prioritize DEIB initiatives without prioritizing access to mental health care. And you cannot fully support mental health without considering the impact of culture and social identity on people's day-to-day lives. What links DEIB and mental health together is **belonging**.

The success of DEIB initiatives is measured by the ability to retain diverse talent. You must create an environment where employees feel that they belong. And the feeling of belonging stems from having a psychologically safe environment that prioritizes mental well-being.



## Belonging in the Workplace

Belonging means feeling safe, accepted, and welcome in a group. In the workplace, [it also involves](#) feeling recognized for unique contributions, maintaining harmony with coworkers, being supported in all respects, and having pride in an organization's values and purpose.

Employees with a sense of belonging [are more likely](#) to be engaged in their work, feel loyal to their organizations, and intend to stay at their jobs.

At its core, belonging cannot exist without psychological safety or confidence that a group won't negatively judge questions, ideas, and self-expression.

In a [survey](#) of 1,000 global employees, 90% said psychological safety is important for:

- Productivity and retention
- Preventing mistakes
- Creativity at work

But the survey also found that companies, while recognizing the importance of psychological safety, don't do enough about it; only 10% prioritized psychological safety within the workplace.

Ultimately, employers should [cultivate a psychologically safe work environment](#) as a necessary prerequisite for any DEIB efforts.



# Building Belonging Into Your DEIB Strategy

Here's how you can incorporate evidence-based strategies for well-being, inclusion, and belonging into your DEIB efforts.

## Move From Tolerant and Inclusive to *Integrative*

As you develop your organizational strategy around DEIB, take inventory of your organization's language, norms, values, environment, and even products and services. Then, assess whether your organization's practices in each category are tolerant, inclusive, or integrative.

### Tolerant

Acknowledges individual differences but does not embrace or accept other cultural groups and their norms.

#### What tolerance may look like

- Recognition that not all employees celebrate the same holiday, but not offering a floating holiday or a paid holiday for non-majority holidays.
- Acknowledgment that employees may have differing views, values, and beliefs without respecting these differences.
- Perceived devaluation of cultural practices and beliefs that are dissimilar to your own.

### Inclusive

Behaviors, language, and attitudes that are considerate of other cultural groups and their group norms.

#### What inclusion may look like

- Diverse representation among employees and customers.
- Racially/ethnically diverse representation throughout products, services, and marketing.
- ERGs exist to provide safe spaces for communities to engage.
- Marginalized voices are welcomed to contribute.

### Integrative

An extension of inclusivity: Consideration of your and others' cultures in every encounter.

#### What integration may look like

- Thinking about diversity in the planning process of any team initiatives.
- Representation throughout products, services, and marketing extends beyond race, proactively considering other dimensions, including age, ability, status, and religion.
- Vetting your vendors for commitment to DEIB.
- Marginalized communities themselves do not bear the weight of ERG creation and administration. Executive sponsors and allies are core partners in these efforts.



# Prioritize Safe Spaces for Diverse Communities With ERGs

Employee Resource Groups (ERGs) can be a great starting point for employees to find a sense of belonging and community. ERGs provide safe spaces for employees to connect with others who can relate to their culture or identity, allowing them to reflect on their shared experiences, grow personally and professionally, and engage with similar ERGs in other organizations.

For organizations that already have established ERGs, here are questions to reflect on:

- Do your ERGs have engaged executive sponsors?
- Are your ERGs' efforts discussed and shared with the broader organization?
- Is the workload within ERGs distributed among allies as well?
- Do employee performance reviews take into account individuals' contributions to ERGs and DEIB?
- Are ERG leads involved in your new hire onboarding process to ensure that practices are inclusive and integrative?
- Do your ERGs have a resource to support allyship engagement and training?



# Resources Available to You and Your Employees Today

Given the inextricable link between DEIB and well-being, access to culturally centered mental health resources is essential to your DEIB strategy. Modern Health incorporates [cultural humility training and culturally centered care](#) into our provider network and care offerings.



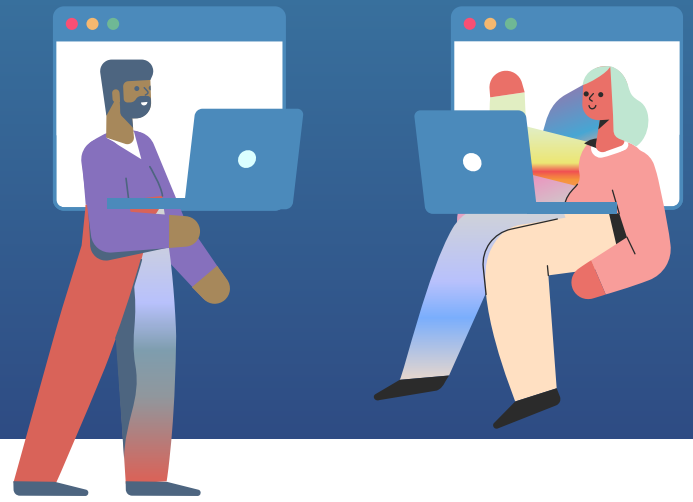
## Community Circles

Circles are live and on-demand group sessions led by Modern Health therapists and coaches. Your employees will walk away from each session with skills to navigate challenges that may impact them at work, at home, or in their relationships. The most popular Circles are available on-demand in multiple languages.

We invite you to share Modern Health's [Allyship Across Identities](#) and [Identity-Based Spaces](#) Circles series with your organization as a resource to help employees of all identities and backgrounds, including allies, find community and belonging around mental health.

We also continue to offer our [foundational Circles](#) on topics like Emotional Resilience, Sleep, and Stress & Burnout.



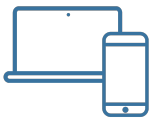


## One-On-One Care

Modern Health can match your employees with a certified coach or therapist trained in evidence-based methods to support their unique needs. You can include race/ethnicity, language, gender, sexual orientation, or other characteristics in your provider search to ensure the best possible fit for your needs and preferences.

All our providers have access to clinical training in cultural humility and use proven techniques to provide you with culturally centered and thoughtful care. Getting started is quick and easy.

[Get matched with a provider today!](#)



## Self-Guided Digital Resources

With Modern Health, your employees have access to digital resources on-demand 24/7 with self-serve care options they can engage with at their own pace. These resources include digital programs, guided meditations, and courses that help employees explore their social identity and find belonging. Some examples include our:

[Talking About Social Identity in Relationships course](#)

[My Identity Map program](#)

[Finding Community and Belonging meditation](#)

[Increase Belonging, Understand Your Social Identity Daily Pause](#)

