

Authenticity and covering: A toolkit

The @Work Toolkit is a collection of additional resources and tips that might be useful when discussing the topic with your team.

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Definitions

Code-switching: the process of shifting from linguistic code, a language or dialect, to another, depending on the social context or conversational setting. It was first coined in 1954 by Einar Haugen and in the 1970s became known to define what people of color, particularly Black people, use as a tool to navigate certain interactions. In recent years, it has increasingly become a term to also describe how LGBTQ people have to adjust their behaviors and dialect in settings.

Authenticity: being true to your own personality, values, and spirit, regardless of the pressure that you're under to act otherwise.

Sources: [Britannica](#); [Yes Magazine](#)

Did You Know

“93% of our survey respondents agree that being authentic at work is important. In fact, over half (52%) feel that authenticity is extremely important. ... Virtually no one feels that authenticity is an unimportant factor in the workplace.”

[Source: Simmons University Institute for Inclusive Leadership – 2021 Leadership Development Survey](#)

How to talk about identity in the workplace

Begin with yourself. Liz Kleinrock writes in her book, “Start Here Start Now: A Guide to Antibias and Antiracist Work in Your School and Community,” that the beginning of anti-bias, ant-racist work is with yourself. “Have you spent time reflecting on the intersections of your own identity?” asks Kleinrock. She observes, “Like most folks, I sometimes feel uncomfortable when presented with a perspective that pushes against a preconceived notion, but I try to view these moments as opportunities to grow and learn.”

To begin this process of self-reflection, do a quick brainstorm. Write down your name in the center of a piece of paper. Brainstorm all of the qualities that constitute your identity: *Age, race, body type, gender, language, ethnicity, sexuality, citizenship status, abilities, class, religion, and education.* Starting with these traits can be a useful place to start a conversation about identity in the workplace.