

the catalyst DIVERSITY

DISCUSSION GUIDE

“Diversity means difference and it is a component of all interactions and relationships. Anytime two or more people are gathered together, diversity is at play. If we are going to work with other people, if we are going to design and build things for other people, if we are going to lead and educate and manage and care for other people, understanding the dynamics of diversity must be priority.”

- joe gerstandt



joe gerstandt

using this guide

This Discussion Guide has been designed for use by individuals and/or groups to further explore the dynamics of diversity.

There is no right or wrong way to use these materials. But watching the video, followed by individual reflection and then a group conversation, seems to work well.

Please share these resources with people and groups of people that you think would benefit from the message.

Be good to each other.

joe

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diversity is the catalyst

If you and I are willing and able to be authentic with each other, there is going to be difference between us. Diversity is not political, although we often make it political. Diversity is also not an agenda, although we often treat it as such.

a few important characteristics to keep in mind regarding diversity:

1. **Diversity means difference.**
2. **Diversity takes many forms.** There are many, maybe countless, ways in which we are different from each other.
3. **Diversity is relational.** Diversity exists between people, not in people. It is a relational or shared attribute not an individual attribute. You can only be different *from* – relationship is inherent.
4. **Diversity brings tension.** When you increase the diversity of a group, team, department, or organization, you are also increasing the potential for tension, conflict, misunderstanding and misinterpretation.

A group's ability to benefit from diversity has a lot to do with its ability to deal with tension in a healthy, functional way. Groups with greater diversity tend to overperform or underperform groups with less diversity. The difference lies in their ability to deal with tension.

There are many misunderstandings related to diversity. But one that gets in the way of a lot of progress is the underlying idea that bad people are judgmental (or biased, prejudiced) and good people are not judgmental (or biased, prejudiced).

Unfortunately, a great deal of diversity and inclusion work has been built on this paradigm and to some extent has been focused on finding bad people and fixing them. This is why the vast majority of us have no idea why we end up in so-called "diversity training." We consider ourselves to be good people; diversity training is for bad people.

We know enough today about human behavior and the human brain to know that this is horribly inaccurate. We cannot change what we do not acknowledge, and all real diversity efforts must be rooted in understanding that we are all judgmental.

Bias and prejudice do not require any bad intentions, hatred or fear. Hatred and fear simply amplify our natural tendencies to jump to conclusions, make assumptions, label, and categorize people.

Regardless of what we believe about people, regardless of what we know about people, regardless of what we feel in our heart, part of the brain's job is to fill in the gaps, jump to conclusions, and to make assumptions. We should not view this as a good thing or a bad thing but simply as a true thing.

"What looks like resistance is often a lack of clarity."

– Switch
Dan & Chip Heath

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individual reflection

Can you think of a time when it became obvious that someone had made incorrect assumptions about you?

Can you think of a time when you realized that you were operating on incorrect assumptions about someone else?

Where do these assumptions come from?

What are some of the assumptions that might show up in your interactions with customers (internal and/or external)?

There is no hatred or fear required for us to be biased in our interactions with others and in our decision making regarding others. It is a natural part of human beings being human around other human beings.

Actionable, evidence-based diversity and inclusion work is not about whether you are a “good” or “bad” person. It is about reducing the impact of individual and group bias so that we might make better decisions about people.

What are you doing today (as individuals, groups, departments, organizations) to mitigate bias? The answer might very well be “nothing” as many of us are unaware of our assumptions and biases that act as unconscious barriers to diversity.

“Conformity
makes us
radically
incomplete.
Easier to manage,
but incomplete
and unhealthy.”

-John Taylor Gatto

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group discussion

The questions in this section are designed to promote and guide group discussion. Share with your colleagues or with others in your organization or community.

discussion questions

mitigate bias on a personal level:

- **Assumptions:** When and where might be some valuable places, times, situations for me to develop the habit of looking for and challenging assumptions?
- **3rd chair:** When and where might be some valuable places, times, situations for me to develop the habit of taking the 3rd chair perspective?
- When and how can I start?
- What do I need in the form of support and accountability?

mitigate bias on a group level:

- **Assumptions:** When and where might be some valuable places, times, situations for us as a group to operationalize the practice of looking and for and challenging assumptions?
- **3rd chair:** When and where might be some valuable places, times, situations for us as a group to operationalize the practice of taking the 3rd chair perspective?
- When and how can we get started?
- How will we hold each other accountable?

seek out difference:

- **People:** What are some things that we can do to continue bringing new and different folks into our network of relationships?
- **Information:** What are some things that we can do to continue exposing ourselves to, sharing and considering new and different sources of information.

homophily:

the tendency of individuals to associate and bond with similar others.

The presence of homophily has been discovered in a vast array of network studies. More than 100 studies have observed homophily in some form or another and they establish that similarity breeds connection. These include age, gender, class, and organizational role.

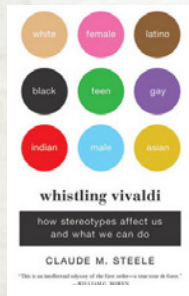
— Wikipedia

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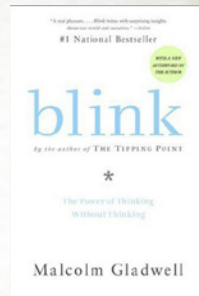
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recommended reading



**WHISTLING VIVALDI:
HOW STEREOTYPES
AFFECT US AND
WHAT WE CAN DO**

Claude Steele



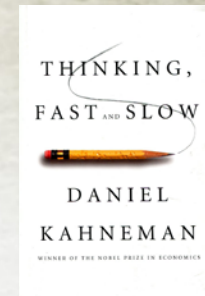
**BLINK: THE POWER
OF THINKING
WITHOUT THINKING**

Malcolm Gladwell



**THE HIDDEN BRAIN:
HOW OUR UNCONSCIOUS
MINDS ELECT
PRESIDENTS, CONTROL
MARKETS, WAGE WARS,
AND SAVE OUR LIVES**

Shankar Vedantam



**THINKING,
FAST AND SLOW**

Daniel Kahneman

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If you are interested in booking joe, please contact
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