

# Can you really bring your whole self to work?

LCLD Pathfinder Program 2017



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## Introduction

“We believe there is a widespread feeling that people are meant to check a lot of stuff at the door when they arrive at work. Some of that makes sense, but there’s a risk of having people feel diminished or unable to contribute fully”\*

\*Stewart Butterfield, the CEO and co-founder of Slack



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## Objectives

- Discuss what it means to bring your whole self to work (challenges and advantages)
- Explore the role “covering” identities may play in whether someone feels connected at work
- Provide strategies to support you in leveraging your best self at work



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## Dimensions of Diversity



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## Sexual Orientation & Gender Identity

**Sexual Orientation:** An individual's physical, romantic, emotional and/or spiritual attraction to another person

**Gender Identity:** An individual's internal sense of being along the male/female spectrum of gender

**Gender Expression:** The external characteristics and behaviors that are socially defined as either "masculine", "feminine" or "androgynous" (e.g., dress, mannerisms, speech patterns and social interactions)

**LGBT[QIA]:** Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Queer, Intersex, Asexual

**Transgender:** An adjective used to describe an individual whose gender identity does not match the sex

**Gender Transition:** The process of changing gender from one's birth-assigned gender to one's gender identity they were assigned at birth



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## Intersectionality

How the overlap of various social identities, may contribute either to the increased marginalization or privilege experienced by an individual.



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## DISCUSSION



For you, what does it mean to bring your "whole self" to work?

- Can you bring your whole self to work?
- Is it important to you to be able to bring your whole self to work?
- What makes it easier or more challenging for you to be "yourself" at work?



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## Covering



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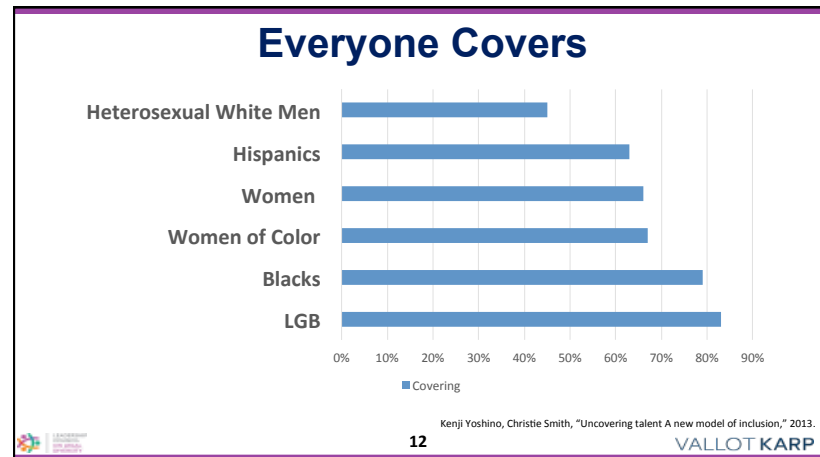
Covering is...

Downplaying a **stigmatized identity to fit into the mainstream**. This differs from "passing" in that an individual will manage their identity so that others are not aware of a particular aspect of their identity.

*Not all groups have the capacity to pass, but all groups have the capacity to cover*

Kenji Yoshino, Christie Smith, "Uncovering talent A new model of inclusion," 2013.  
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- ### Types of Covering
- **Appearance Based:**  
Altering appearance to "blend in"
  - **Affiliation Based:**  
Avoiding behaviors widely associated with perceived negative stereotypes about one's identity group
  - **Advocacy Based:**  
Staying silent/not sticking up for your identity group
  - **Association Based:**  
Avoiding contact with other identity group members
- Kenji Yoshino, Christie Smith, "Uncovering talent A new model of inclusion," 2013.  
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## Famous Examples



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## DISCUSSION



- Identify a time when you felt you had to “cover” some aspect of your identity.
- How, if at all, did it impact your ability to feel connected and/or perform at your best?



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## Things to Keep in Mind

“...Covering is not just something “they” do, it is something “we” do.”

Kenji Yoshino

- Covering has a cost – to you, to your colleagues, and to the organization
- Don’t assume to know when others are covering
- Organizational culture plays a role; however, you also have power and options



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## Self-Disclosure



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## Self-Disclosure: What to Consider

- Content and Pacing
  - What's too much? too little?
- Cultural Alignment
  - Consider the culture of your department, practice group, office, etc.
- Authenticity
  - Be courageous and genuine
  - Share situation-specific stories
- Test for Impact
  - Self-reflect: how do you feel afterward
  - Check for impact/solicit feedback



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## DISCUSSION



- What factors help and hinder your willingness to share/self-disclose at work?
- What guideposts do you use to decide whether, when, and what to share?



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## Bringing Your Whole Self: Things to Keep in Mind

- Inclusion starts with "I"
- Be courageous
- Assume people are interested in getting to know you
- Practice "appropriate" self-disclosure
- Look for ways to promote an inclusive culture for everyone



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## Your action plan

Identify one specific thing you commit to do (or stop doing) to bring more of your whole self to work

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## Thank you!

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