Authentic Inclusion via Applied Improvisation

This program explores how organizations can build a culture that does not simply tolerate but celebrates each individual showing-up as their authentic selves. The program focuses on integrating consistent behavior shifts that add up to a truly safe environment for self-expression and acceptance.

Program Objectives:

•Explore transparency, vulnerability and emotional congruency as techniques for trust-building and inclusion

•Explore new techniques/concepts to improve relationship-building skills (with colleagues, clients, and at home)

•Enjoy a new, fun experience as one team, all experiencing 'beginner's mind' together, journeying through a creative approach and making discoveries on a level playing field.

Participant Take-aways:

•Heightened self-awareness of strengths and challenges around inclusion.

•Practical, applicable behaviors to practice hearing and being heard.
With practice, these behaviors will:
  •Improve Performance in Receiving and Sending Messages (Listening and Communicating)
  •Improved Performance in Building Trusting Relationships
  •Improved Performance in *Authentic* Collaboration, Acceptance and Inclusion

Program Description:

This highly interactive session explores the above objectives via the introduction of **Applied Improvisation** skills. The program is a series of experiential activities, each exploring a behavioral skill that helps strengthen authentic interpersonal connection in service of the larger cultural goal of inclusion.

We begin by setting up a safe learning environment. We practice curiosity and vulnerability in a playful way. We then work on being fully present by releasing fear, and then learn to listen to and support others by releasing our inner pre-conceived scripts. These exercises are fun and playful, yet the skill-debrief and subsequent discussions of organizational applications are serious and transformative.

A model of Inclusion is then introduced. It covers Exclusion, Inclusion, Assimilation and Differentiation. Those categories and discussed and examined through the lens of 'belongingness' and 'uniqueness.' If requested by the client, this model opens up discussion of the current organizational culture.

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Throughout the program, participants explore the skills that professional improvisers use to successfully create an exceptional experience for their audience. These skills are:

- **Being Present/not thinking ahead (releasing internal scripts and external distractions)**
- **Listening with intention to accept and build upon the others' offers (offers are anything that is said or done by the team-mate (colleague/client)**
- **Consistent non judgmental support of team-mate choices**
- **Releasing fear/tension and, instead, confidently committing to one's choices**
- **Releasing control in favor of discovery**
- **Flexibility/Adaptability to change/disruption/inconsistency**

Participants are on their feet much of the time, in large and small groups. Individuals are never singled out (unless they volunteer), making the atmosphere safe and comfortable for exploration and development.

This program should be part of a long-term plan for company culture shifting. As such, an Accountability Partner is suggested. At the end of the program, each participant commits to one behavior change, and is accountable to a partner who will check in with him/her at a later date. When the first behavior change is integrated, another commitment to change occurs, and so on.   After consistent behavior practice, interactions become more collaborative, trusting, inclusive and fruitful, improving a team's capacity to work productively and effectively together.