

# Inclusion Works Workout

Defy stereotypes

3+ participants | 30 minutes | Easy



**Inclusion Works**  
by  Hive Learning

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# Explore and share how you break expectations using the simple “I am, but I am not” exercise

People: your team | Time: 30 mins | Difficulty: Easy

Resources: a piece of paper each, and a spare for you to record useful outputs

## Why?

A first step your team can take to kick-start conversations about diversity and inclusion is to talk about what makes your own identities rich and complex.

This simple exercise prompts each participant to claim three important dimensions of their identity and dispel any exclusionary stereotypes around them. Since feeling included requires feeling seen and respected for who you really are, it's also an opportunity to talk about any inclusion quick-wins your team can agree to.

Like Ivan Coyote, spoken word performer and LGBTQ+ activist said, “I am a rare species, not a stereotype.” And we should all feel like this in our workplace.

This exercise was adapted from Marjorie Allen’s [Questioning Stereotypes exercise](#).



**Bring a little bit more of your whole self to work and understand the stereotypes that you and your teammates break by being yourselves.**

## One week before



Send round an email confirming that you will be doing a 30-minute session about our identities and the incorrect assumptions that make us feel excluded or misunderstood.

## On the day

1

0:00 – 0:05

### Warm-up with an ice-breaker question.

Ask the room, “What is your everyday superpower? Some examples of everyday superpowers are always sitting next to the chattiest passenger, managing to do forty squats while the kettle boils, and telling knock-out bedtime stories”.

Go first and say, “My everyday superpower is...” before going around the room round-robin style.

2

0:05 – 0:10

**Explain the exercise.** Ask participants to take one piece of paper each and divide into two columns.

In the left-hand column they will write “I am \_\_\_\_\_”

In the right-hand column they will write “but I am not \_\_\_\_\_”

The statement on the left can be filled in with a description like the participant's age, nationality, ethnicity, family role, hobby, gender etc. The statement on the right is something that breaks a stereotype or goes against expectations related to what is on the left.

Examples:

"I am in my fifties but I am not bad with technology."

"I am a married woman but I am not planning on having children."

"I am gay but I am not 'camp'."

**3** 0:10 – 0:15

**Give the group five minutes** in silence to write three statements relating to three different and important dimensions of their diversity. Tell them they can work alone or team up, whatever suits their thinking style. In this time, complete your own trio of statements so you can contribute, too.

**4** 0:15 – 0:30

**Share the outputs** round-robin style. Each participant will share one line at a time, so go around the group three times. Remind participants it is okay to pass.

Solicit quick feedback from the room for every statement you share. You might ask, "Did you know that about \_\_\_\_\_?", "How might we be more inclusive towards \_\_\_\_\_ now you know this?"

Note down any insightful comments about how the team can be more inclusive.

An inclusion action is tiny, such as asking how someone's hobby is going every week or to avoid a presumptuous question that makes someone feel excluded.

## Afterwards

✓ Type up the inclusion notes you took as a series of short, bullet-point actions in an email. Add your most memorable moment from the session such as a funny line or multiple people learning they face the same incorrect stereotype. Share with the participants and thank them for their time and for opening up.

✓ In your 1:1s, prompt discussion and reflection using the following talking points:

- How did it feel to select and share the three parts of your identity?
- Have you managed to put any of the suggested inclusion actions into action?
- Was there anything you could have shared in the session, but didn't feel comfortable talking about as a group?

- ✔ Pick one of your own “I am, but I am not” lines and start a conversation about it with somebody that did *not* attend your Workout session such as a colleague from another team or a trusted friend.
- ✔ If appropriate to, ask your close friends about stereotypes they’ve been subjected to and listen to their experiences.
- ✔ Commit to widening your perspective by watching a video that dispels stereotypes like BBC Three’s lighthearted series, [Things Not to Say](#), or learning on your social media break (yes, really) by searching #notyourstereotype. If appropriate to, share anything that surprised you with your team.