A scenic landscape featuring a vibrant blue lake in the foreground, a dense green forest on the left, and rugged mountains with patches of snow in the background. A bright rainbow arches across the sky, reflecting on the water's surface. The sky is filled with soft, white clouds.


Use inclusive language
to build trust

Worthwhile Research & Consulting

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PART 1

Why does
language matter?

A close-up photograph of a person wearing a blue long-sleeved shirt, holding a brown cardboard shipping box. The box has a white shipping label with a barcode and some text. The person's hands are visible, one at the top and one at the bottom of the box. The background is blurred, showing green foliage. A semi-transparent blue horizontal band is overlaid across the middle of the image, containing white text.

Language isn't just about
sharing information.

A photograph of three runners in silhouette on a track at sunset. The runners are in motion, with their hair and clothing slightly blurred. The sun is low on the horizon, creating a bright glow and long shadows. The sky is a deep blue. A dark horizontal band is overlaid across the middle of the image, containing the text.

Language is social action.

We use language to create,
maintain, and end relationships.



Most conversations with a person you don't know well have you looking for and highlighting things in common.



What do you have
in common?

Five-minute timer



5 minutes



Your challenge:
On “opposite” sides

Another challenge:
Other differences

When you can't rely on
commonalities to build a
relationship,
what can you use?

Inclusive language

1. Scientific principles can help.
2. You can make small changes right away.
3. You can navigate on your own.

TODAY'S AGENDA

WHAT WE'LL BE COVERING

1. Why does language matter?
2. Flavor and frames
3. The 6 principles of inclusive language
4. Deep dive: respect
5. Deep dive: perspectives and pain points
6. Challenges
7. Wrap-up



YOUR MATERIALS

1. Agenda + Breakout Discussions
2. Take aways





Language can feel like
a minefield.

There's a new 21st century etiquette.



Every single thing you say or
write can cause a relationship to
improve or deteriorate.



Problematic language **harms**
relationships.



Inclusive language improves
relationships.



Our speech and writing
land differently
on different people.



“I w o u l d n ’ t m i n d i f
s o m e o n e s a i d i t t o m e .”



“Now that we’re
stuck at home for the
foreseeable future...”



“But I looked in the dictionary, and the definition shows it’s a perfectly fine word.”



“Just tell me the words
I shouldn't use and
the words I should use
in their place.”



Discussion time!

Ten-minute timer



10 minutes



Two-minute insight:



2 minute



PART 2

Flavor and frames

“I wouldn’t mind if
someone said it to me.”



“Aren’t they being
oversensitive?”



PERSPECTIVE TAKING

Cognitive skill

Projecting into another
person's point of view

Two components



ROLE SWITCH

Looking at the situation
from the other person's
perspective



LIVED EXPERIENCE

Taking into account
potential differences in
experiences, norms,
values

Two components



ROLE SWITCH

Looking at the situation from the other person's perspective



LIVED EXPERIENCE

Taking into account potential differences in experiences, norms, values

Even **small changes** in
position can really
change people's
experiences





Height
Birth order
Hair texture



Bigger changes in
position can cause
even bigger differences



Gender
Religion
Race
Disability
Neurodiversity
Class
Sexuality



Different lived experiences
can lead to
different reactions
to the same situation



1. The “flavor” of words
2. Semantic frames



Language isn't neutral.

“There are no ‘neutral’
words and forms
that belong to no one.”

—Mikhail Bakhtin





“All words have the
‘taste’ of a profession,
a genre... a particular
person, an age group.”

—Mikhail Bakhtin





“Each word tastes of
the context in which it
has lived its socially
charged life.”

—Mikhail Bakhtin





Exotic



Exotic

P O W W O W





P o w w o w

Discussion time!

Ten-minute timer



10 minutes



Two-minute insight:



2 minutes



S e m a n t i c f r a m e

A hidden structure that
tells you how a word is related
to the world around you



Semantic frame

A single word can generate
a whole scenario, with a
setting, players, and action



“Purchase”

- Buyer
- Seller
- Goods
- Money
- Location



Sometimes, **bias**
is hidden in the
semantic frame



Person A: *Abrasive*

Person B: *Straightforward*



Person A: Opinionated

Person B: Confident




Person A: Neglectful of child

Person B: Giving child

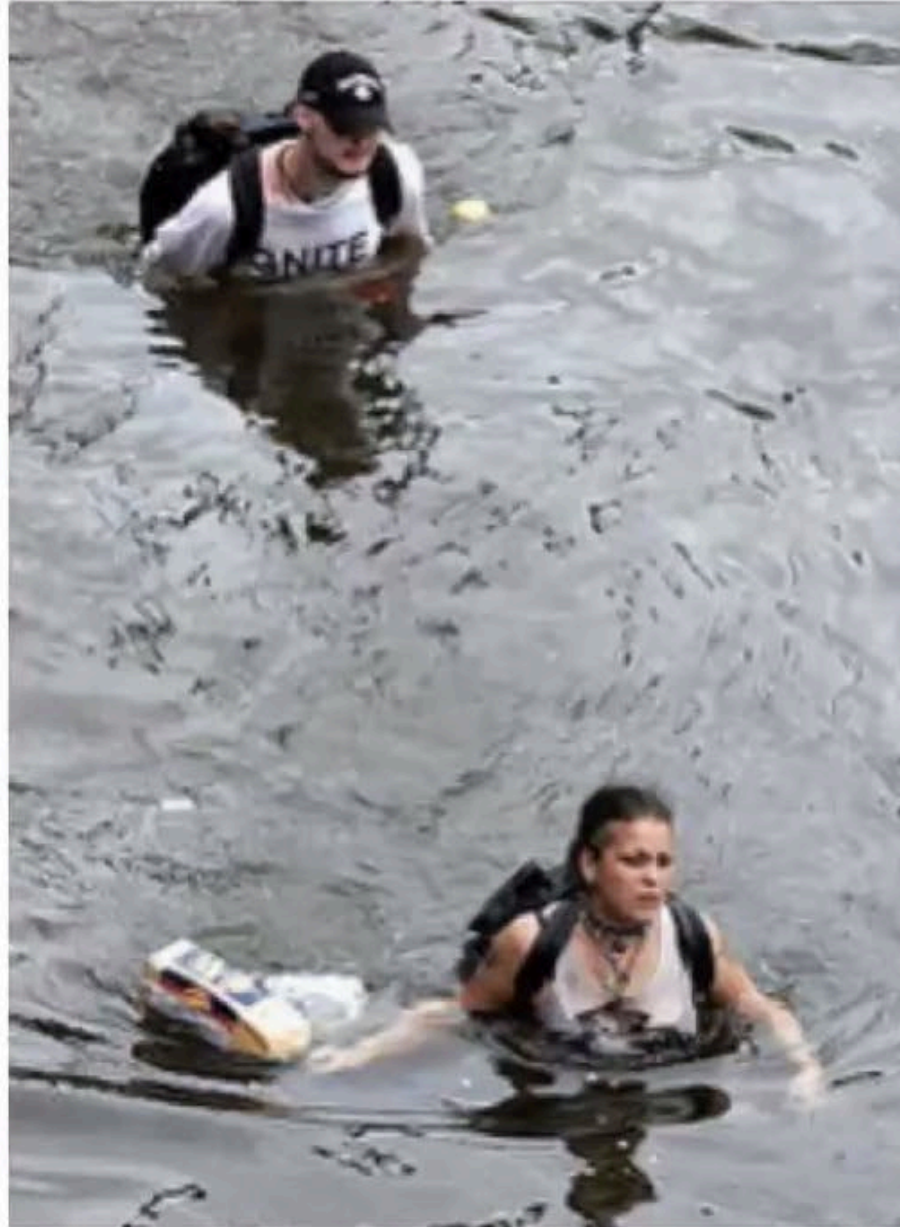
autonomy





Think about the scenario
of the verb “loot.”





TWO RESIDENTS WADE THROUGH CHEST-DEEP WATER AFTER **FINDING** BREAD AND SODA FROM A LOCAL GROCERY STORE AFTER HURRICANE KATRINA CAME THROUGH THE AREA IN NEW ORLEANS, LOUISIANA. (AFP/GETTY IMAGES/CHRIS RAYTHEN)



A YOUNG MAN WALKS THROUGH CHEST DEEP FLOOD WATER AFTER **LOOTING** A GROCERY STORE IN NEW ORLEANS ON TUESDAY, AUG 30, 2005. (AP PHOTO/DAVE MARTIN)

HURRICANE KATRINA, 2005

Who gets framed as
“finding”?

Who gets framed as
“looting”?



What's the scenario for
“circle the wagons”?

How about
“hold down the fort”?



A word's frame can set
someone up as the
enemy or as a criminal.



Discussion time!

Ten-minute timer



10 minutes



Two-minute insight:



2 minutes



PART 3

The 6 principles of
inclusive language

1. Reflect reality
2. Show respect
3. Draw people in
4. Incorporate other perspectives
5. Prevent erasure
6. Recognize pain points



1. Distort reality
2. Express disrespect
3. Marginalize and exclude people
4. Present a single perspective as universal
5. Erase people and histories
6. Ignore or lightly reference painful histories or experiences



1. Inclusive language
accurately reflects reality.



“Gutenberg invented the
printing press in 1452.”



h u s b a n d o r
w i f e

s p o u s e o r
p a r t n e r

l a d i e s a n d
g e n t l e m e n

e s t e e m e d g u e s t s

o p p o s i t e s e x

a n o t h e r g e n d e r



2 . Inclusive language
shows respect.



“I’m a f r a i d I’m g o i n g t o
b u t c h e r t h i s n a m e”



“So easy, your grandmother will understand it.”

“Explain it clearly enough that your mother would get it.”

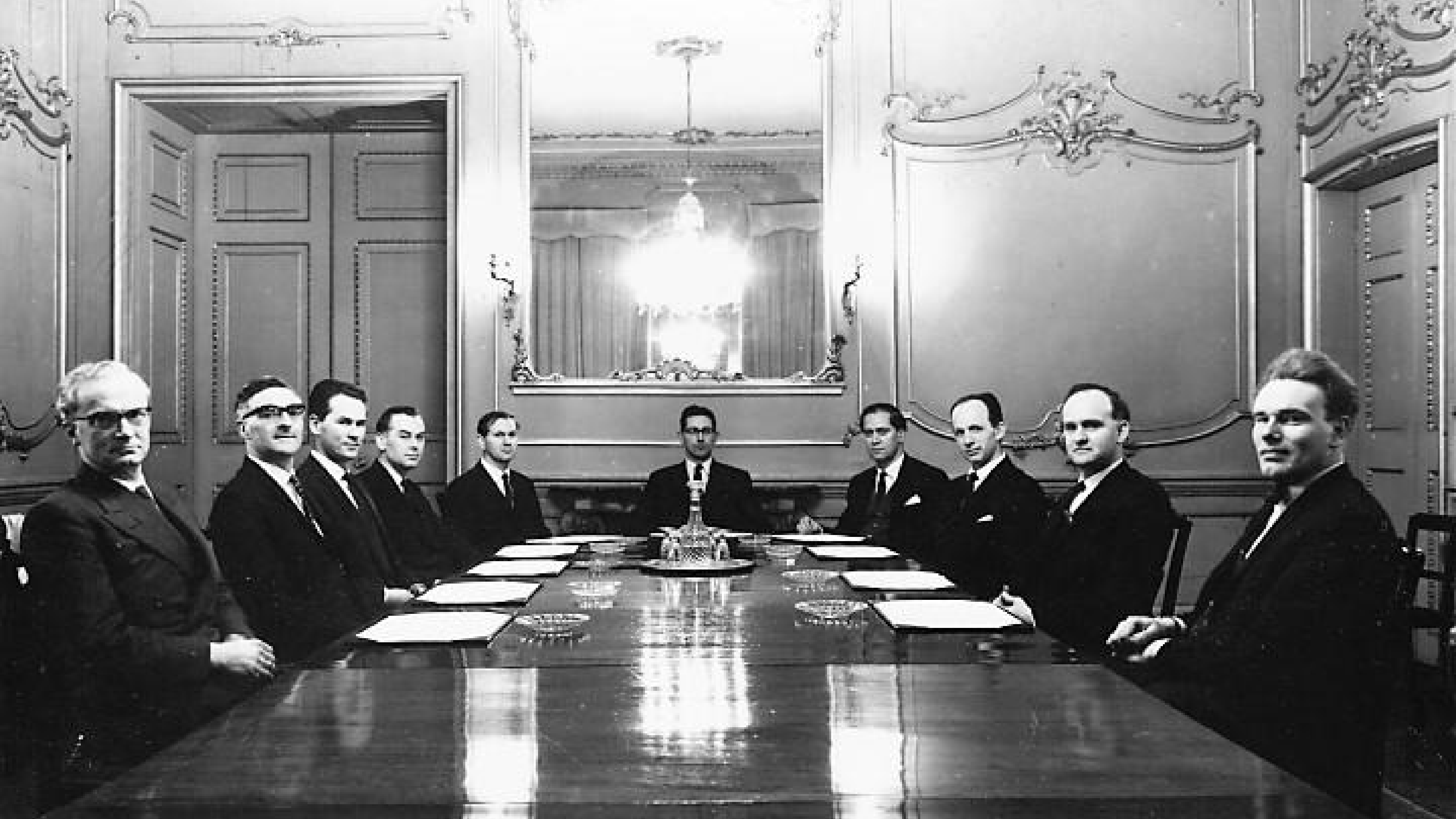


Presumed incompetent



3 . I n c l u s i v e l a n g u a g e
d r a w s p e o p l e i n .







Chicago Tribune 
@chicagotribune



Wife of a Bears' lineman wins a bronze medal today in Rio Olympics trib.in/2asmvvr



2:33 PM · Aug 7, 2016 · TweetDeck



m a n k i n d

m a n h o u r s

c r a f t s m a n

m a n m a d e



m a n k i n d

m a n h o u r s

c r a f t s m a n

m a n m a d e

h u m a n k i n d

p e r s o n h o u r s

a r t i s a n

s y n t h e t i c



4. Inclusive language
incorporates other
perspectives.



“This Sunday, **w e a l l** honor our
mothers.”

“Wishing **y o u** a Happy Mother’s
Day.”



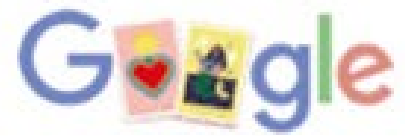
“Millennials are less likely to save than previous generations.”

“Many millennials with college degrees carry significant student loan debt that hampers their ability to save.”



5. Inclusive language
prevents erasure.





when was denver settled



All

News

Images

Maps

Shopping

More

Settings

Tools

About 11,200,000 results (0.67 seconds)

November 1858

Located on the banks of the South Platte River close to the foothills of the Rocky Mountains, Denver was founded in **November 1858** as a gold mining town. The gold quickly dried up and the city moved to become a supply hub for new mines in the mountains.

[History of Denver - Wikipedia](#)

[https://en.wikipedia.org > wiki > History_of_Denver](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_Denver)

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“Hey, guys!”

“You guys...”

Who is the guy
sitting at that table
over there?



6. Inclusive language
recognizes pain points.



psycho
totally insane
schizophrenic



psycho

totally insane

schizophrenic

unpredictable

over the top

erratic



Discussion time!

Ten-minute timer



10 minutes



Two-minute insight:



2 minutes





Lunch!

We'll start
again at 1.

PART 4

Deep dive:
Respect

Wanting to be treated
with respect is a
human universal.

But exactly **HOW**
to show respect
can vary.

Always respectful

Names

Accurate pronunciation

Correct spelling

Andréa, Mei Ling, Siobhan



Always respectful

Addressing and referring

Correct honorific

Ms., Mrs., Mr., Mx.

Correct pronouns



Always respectful

Preferred group names

Native? Indian?

Specific Native nation

Tribe? Nation? Band?



Always respectful

Preferred group names

Hispanic? Latino? Latinx?

Latine?

Specific country of origin



Always disrespectful

Code crossing

Mock Spanish (“no problemo”)

Mock AAVE (“girrrrrrrrrl!”)



Always disrespectful

Complimenting the “good
English” of non-white
native speakers



Variable

Body language

Eye contact amount?

Handshake? Hug?

Touch while talking?



Variable

Greetings

Minimal then get down to
business?

Expanded?



Variable

Attitude towards time

What does “on time” mean?

Take up time? Or not intrude?



Discussion time!

Ten-minute timer



10 minutes



Two-minute insight:



2 minutes



PART 5

Deep dive:
Perspectives and
pain points

“She can’t
control herself.”

What is under a person's
control?

And what is due to factors
outside of their control?

When you can't rely on
commonalities to build a
relationship,
what can you use?

Incorporate other
perspectives

Recognize pain points

What do you think are
the biggest pain points
that aren't recognized?

Discussion time!

Ten-minute timer



10 minutes



Two-minute insight:



2 minutes



Stigma

“The situation of the individual who is disqualified from full social acceptance.”

—Erving Goffman



Challenge

American taboos about
talking about money.



Challenge

Cultures where women aren't supposed to deal with money but now they have to.



Challenge

American taboos talking about mental health and illness: addiction, anxiety, depression, suicidality.



Challenge

Negative stereotypes about
problem gamblers + people of color
or immigrants or Natives or people
of low socioeconomic status...



Presumed incompetent



Discussion time!

Ten-minute timer



10 minutes



Two-minute insight:



2 minutes



PART 6

Challenges

Challenge 1:

Linguistic distortions



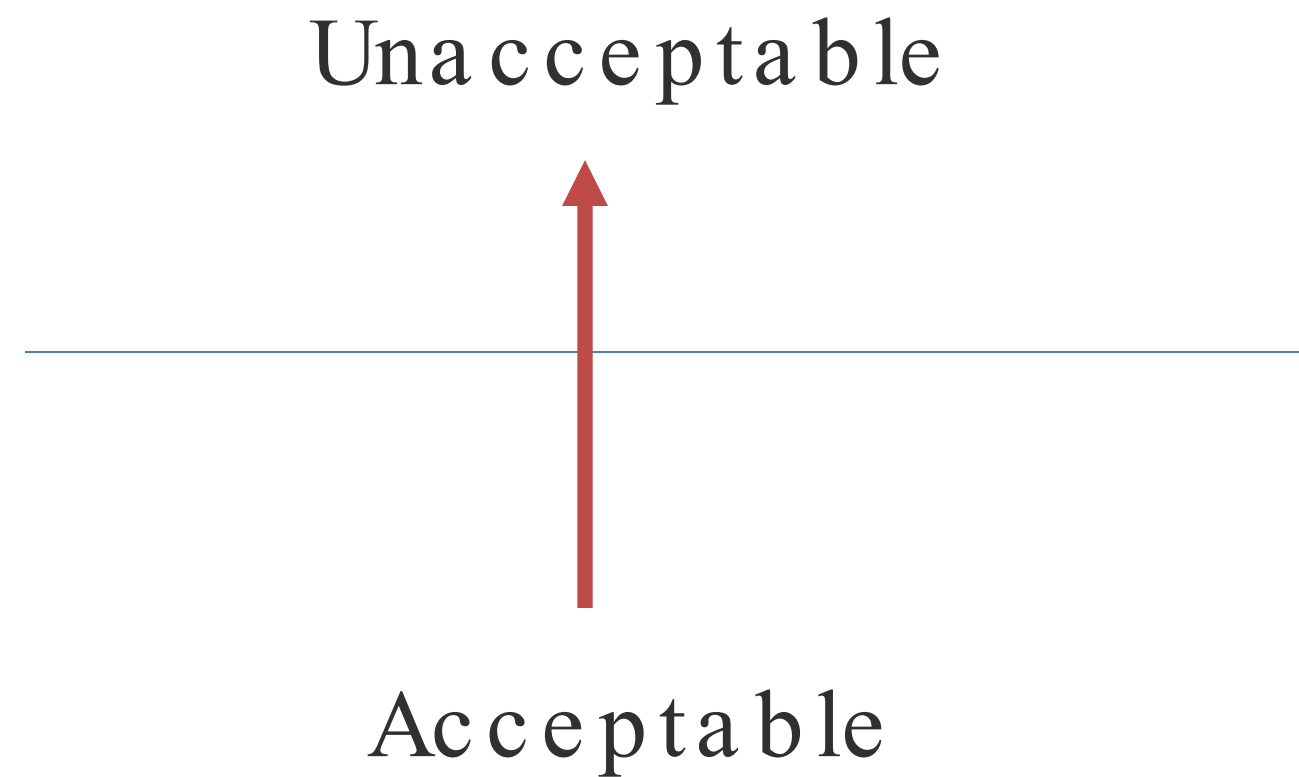
1. Inclusive language
accurately reflects reality.



- Inflatin g la ngu a g e
- Softe nin g la ngu a g e



Inflating language





Queen

Legendary

Competitive

Thug

Ghetto

Classless piece of shit



Dr. Susan Moore, a Black woman, was hospitalized for Covid. She posted a video that went viral, explaining that she was being denied pain medication by her white physician, who said she was downplaying her pain. She died from Covid complications.

After her death, the hospital CEO said that Moore had “intimidated” the nursing staff.



Inflating language is used to
control or **dismiss** people who
are pointing out problems or
asking for better treatment.



Softening language

Unacceptable



Acceptable



Tim: “They ask questions like, ‘So what happened to you?’ ‘How do you put on your pants if you’re in a wheelchair?’ ‘Can you have sex?’”

HR Rep: “Oh, they’re **just curious** . You’re the only wheelchair user in this company, **so they want to learn more about you** .”



The anatomy professor looked at the mostly female group of medical students. He pointed to the open-legged pelvic mannequins. “I should be careful or this could be a #MeToo moment,” he said.

Pointing at the spread legs, he smiled at a group of female students and continued, “don’t worry, you won’t have to do this position.” His male supervisor said later, “Oh, he didn’t mean anything by that. He’s a good guy.”



Who gets the benefit
of the doubt?

Who is assumed to be the
problem and shut down?



Inflating language and
softening language
are problematic.



They **punish** the
wrong people.
And they **protect**
the wrong people.



Challenge 2:

Resistant and problematic people



Dehumanizing and insulting
language to describe
problem gamblers



Describing treatment and services
as “coddling” and “woke.”

Suggesting that only harsh
treatment and punishment is
appropriate.



Challenge 3:

Fear of making mistakes



You are 100% guaranteed
to make mistakes
moving forward.



1. Be gracious about feedback.
2. Correct yourself.
3. Make a plan on how to avoid that mistake in the future.



Discussion time!

Ten-minute timer



10 minutes



Two-minute insight:



2 minutes



WRAP UP

Next steps



Inclusive language

1. Scientific principles can help.
2. You can make small changes right away.
3. You can navigate on your own.

Fill out 3 post-its.

1. Your top takeaway.
2. One thing from today you will commit to teaching 2 people during this conference.
3. One thing from today you will start doing right away.



Please put your post-its
on the wall.

Organize them in
related clumps.



Take your “commitment”
post-its with you!



Thank you!

Good luck!

