

What an Intolerant Bunch We Are!

Did you know that world tolerance day is on 16th November 2025. In fact, it is held on 16th November every year. Why wait though? Perhaps it is worth reflecting on what it means to be tolerant. One definition is 'being able to accept the many differences amongst people'. Although, as a society we may not be so accepting of others, especially of diversity.

We are a diverse bunch and that means different things to different people. Whether it's religion, climate change, politics, gender, race; we all have a view. It isn't necessarily the right one. Being right is about our personal beliefs. Belief is defined as 'An acceptance that something exists or is true especially one without proof'. Our beliefs therefore make us think that our view is right and by default that others are not.

As we look around our community and workplace these beliefs continue to divide people. Instead of simply having a view on a topic, they become ingrained so much that we refuse to see any other perspective. Diversity is a valuable asset. It allows for different ways of thinking and behaving. It allows for considering new and innovative ways of dealing with issues and challenges that are faced in the workplace.

Indeed, psychosocial safety in the workplace is now legislated in much of Australia. A code of practice was introduced in July 2022. It is important to understand that employers not only have a duty of care to support diversity it is now a legal requirement. Having a workplace culture of tolerance, compassion and support goes a long way to ensuring you have that covered.

So how do we embrace diversity and become more tolerant? How do we nurture a culture of inclusion?

One step is to respect others' views. You don't have to agree with that perspective, just be open to it. Tolerance along with compassion and empathy are attributes of emotional intelligence – so learning more about that skill won't do you any harm.

I believe humour is a great characteristic and is unique to the human race. We need to recognise however that one person's 'joke' is another person's offensive remark. We need to be aware of this – especially in the workplace.

Don't vilify people because of their differences, instead defend those who are being got at. Recognise that we all have a right to exist and follow how we wish to live our lives in society and at work.

Include and encourage differing views in meetings and project teams. Allow for different ways of thinking and encourage creativity in looking for solutions.

Finally, be aware of how judgemental humans are. We are designed to look for danger as a means to ensuring we remain safe. Some studies show we can make a judgement about another person within seven seconds. Unfortunately, the primitive part of our brain hasn't caught up with modern styles of living and working. We rely too heavily on our judgement, this often results in unproductive, negative behaviour.

Instead of relying on judgement and responding to it – STOP. Think about what you might say or do which could be the most positive, productive response. Embrace diversity, look for opportunity to include everyone – you might just find we are all the same!