



WILLIAM & MARY

OFFICE OF DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION

Inclusive Leader Insights

If words have power and carry meaning, then we must acknowledge that there is meaning and power behind the words a person uses to express their identity. When connecting with people that you know, or those that you may have just met, consider the following:

Avoid Assumptions

You must be aware of your own bias when communicating with others. Stereotypes and assumptions can cause harm and marginalize individuals and groups. You may incorrectly assume something about a person's identity because of your own perceptions and experiences.

Respect

A person should be allowed to share their identity when ready. Although it is a good practice to introduce yourself by your name, pronouns, and any other identity that you feel compelled to share to provide an opportunity for others to do the same, respect their privacy if they do not reciprocate.

Gender Neutral Language

There are many gendered terms that are in the current English vocabulary. Using gender-inclusive language avoids bias against a particular sex, social gender or social identity. Making a deliberate effort in word choice is one way to reduce bias and promoting gender equality. One example, instead of using "you guys" or "ladies and gentlemen" when addressing a group of people, consider using "you all" or "folks" to be more inclusive.

Pronouns

As you might remember from elementary school, pronouns are used in place of your name. Some examples are "she/her" or "he/him" or gender-neutral pronouns like "they/them". You may have noticed that people have begun sharing their pronouns at the beginning of meetings. This allows for individuals that are comfortable in doing so to self-identify.

When you refer to someone by a gender other than the one that person identifies, it is considered misgendering. If you mistakenly use the wrong pronoun, quickly apologize, use the correct pronoun, and move on making an intentional effort to not repeat the mistake.

Practice

Re-training your mind to think differently about inclusion is not always as simple as flipping a switch. Therefore, it is essential that you practice at work as well as outside of work. The only way to improve is to develop the skills necessary for it to be a part of your daily life.

Visible Support

Just as it is a good practice to introduce yourself by your name, pronouns, and any other identity when connecting with people, you should also share on other forms of outward communication. The quickest way to do this is to include your pronouns in your email signature. Additionally, you can go into your zoom profile and have your pronouns displayed whenever you are in a zoom meeting.

For more information, please contact (wmdiversity@wm.edu).