Embracing differences

October 2011 Monthly Bulletin

Tolerance + acceptance = respect

Dealing with differences

In today’s global environment, we interact constantly with people of different ages, sexes, backgrounds and lifestyles. Whether on the Internet, at work or in our everyday personal lives, we deal with differences all the time. More...

Worklife balance

Disability etiquette: a winning strategy

Do you ever wonder how to act around someone who has a disability? Do you worry that you might say or do the wrong thing? Read on for some basic tips. More...

Learning acceptance at lunchtime

Mixing it up for diversity

This month thousands of schools from California to New York will participate in the 10th annual “Mix It Up at Lunch Day.”¹ It’s a day devoted to teaching children from grades kindergarten through 12th grade about breaking down barriers. More...

Different views, great news!

Embracing differences

What if everyone thought the same, dressed the same, ate the same, did the same thing day after day? There is much to appreciate in differences. More...
Dealing with differences

In today’s global environment, we interact constantly with people of different ages, sexes, backgrounds and lifestyles. Whether on the Internet, at work or in our everyday personal lives, we deal with differences all the time.

Tolerance is key

Tolerance is about understanding, respecting and accepting differences. And that’s not always easy: tolerance often takes determination and effort. Tolerance does not mean agreement. In other words, showing tolerance toward someone else’s beliefs or lifestyle does not mean you need to change your own. You can “accept thy neighbor” without “agreeing with thy neighbor.” The keys are keeping an open mind and having consideration.

Differences in the workplace

It’s especially important to practice tolerance toward coworkers because:

- It makes your job more enjoyable.
  People concentrate and get their work done faster and better when there are “positive vibes” in the workplace.

- Teams are more efficient when members accept and respect each other.
  The result is often greater success with projects and department initiatives. So everyone wins! On the flip side, conflict and distraction can lead to mistakes, accidents and decreased productivity.

- Finally, it’s the law. It’s illegal to bully, harass or discriminate. Those who do so are putting themselves and their jobs at risk.

How can you help?

Be a supporter of acceptance. For example:

- Don’t gossip. Walk away or speak up if there is mean-spirited talk about others.

- Don’t harass or bully. It’s cowardly and illegal.

- Do be a leader instead of a follower.
  Take the lead in showing tolerance. Have lunch or take a break with coworkers who are not in your usual circle of friends. Learn more about them. You may find you have more in common than you thought.

Finally, think of yourself and your family

What if you are one day the oldest, youngest, or in some other way the “different” one at work or in another situation? How would you like others to treat you? How would you like your family or children to be treated? Start now to be an example of acceptance.

Getting Help

For help with personal or workplace issues, contact your Employee Assistance Program (EAP). These confidential services are available 24/7 to employees, their eligible household members and adult children under age 26, whether they live at home or not.

www.horizoncarelink.com
Disability etiquette: a winning strategy

Do you ever wonder how to act around someone who has a disability? Do you worry that you might say or do the wrong thing?

No one wants to hurt, offend or embarrass another person. Unless you are familiar with a person who is disabled, it’s only natural that you may have concerns about the “right” things to say or do.

Here are some basic tips that people with disabilities have identified as being helpful to them:¹

1. **Ask first.** People with disabilities can be very adept at getting around and also quite independent. Ask before you assume they need help.

2. **Avoid judgments.** If you see someone using a cane, wheelchair or other assistive device, don’t assume they are ill or weak. Chances are they’re just like you in many ways — except they use assistance.

3. **Check out access.** If you’re meeting up with someone who has a disability, pick a restaurant, mall or other place that offers mobility access. This means there are ramps, elevators and other ways for people with disabilities to get around safely and comfortably. Avoid taking friends who are disabled to places that don’t offer mobility access.

4. **Respect personal space.** If a person who is disabled needs your help, he or she will usually let you know. Never take hold of people who are blind or have other disabilities without asking. You may surprise them or even get in their way.

5. **Don’t interfere.** If someone is in a wheelchair or has a guide dog, remember that these are assistive devices. Don’t pet the dog, lean on the wheelchair or interfere with the person’s movement or actions.

6. **Take your time.** People with disabilities may need more time to walk, eat or do other things. Let them set the pace.

Remember that a disability is just one aspect of a person. Other than the disability, the person is probably just like you — and will be happy to be considered but not fussed over.

¹Information in this article is taken from www.dosomething.org

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Mixing it up for diversity

This month thousands of schools from California to New York will participate in the 10th annual “Mix It Up at Lunch Day.”¹ It’s a day devoted to teaching children from grades kindergarten through 12th grade about breaking down barriers. In 2010, over 2900 schools participated!

Here’s how it works...

On Mix It Up Day, children in the participating schools leave their comfort zones to eat lunch with another child they don’t know. There are various fun and creative ways that “mix up” lunch partners are determined.

While some kids are nervous, negative or doubtful at first, these days for learning about diversity have proved to be very successful. The “Mix it Up at Lunch Day” movement has spread across the country at a rapid pace.

Learning about differences firsthand

The idea sounds pretty simple, right? Yet the effects can be deep and lasting

- Cliques and stereotypes take a day off. Sometimes, they are changed for good!
- Bashful children have a chance to interact with others. This can help build their self-esteem and also give them a chance to show who they really are.
- Children meet and interact one-to-one with kids they don’t typically spend time with. The result can be new friendships and real changes in attitudes.
- There are often other classroom activities that day that focus on discrimination. Kids think and talk about tolerance, acceptance and keeping an open mind to others.
- Some schools find the day so popular that they plan several mix it up days throughout the year.

Does your community participate?

If you’d like to learn more about Mix It Up at Lunch Day, contact www.tolerance.org or www.peacejam.org to find out how your school can get involved.

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¹All information in this article is from www.tolerance.org and www.peacejam.org

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I don’t know about you, but I sometimes think that it would be much easier if everyone thought the way I did. No arguments, no problems getting along. Everything would flow smoothly.

Then I stop my fantasy and really think this through: Ugh! How boring! What if I never learned something new? What if everyone thought the same, dressed the same, ate the same, did the same thing day after day? I don’t think I could stand it. Could you?

So, let’s be thankful that others:

- Challenge our thinking
- Bring new, creative ideas to our work and home life because they see things from a whole different perspective
- Dress differently
- Eat different foods
- Have varied work skills
- Look and act differently from us

Appreciate how these differences bring so much variety to an otherwise humdrum day. Life without variation would be a very dull reality. Enjoy the diversity around you — it makes the world a more beautiful, exciting place!

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Information is believed to be accurate as of the production date; however, it is subject to change.