Habits of an Equity-Centered Leader

Centering equity allows us to intentionally focus on equity versus the default habit of centering equality. Equality levels the playing field whereas equity considers the systemic and historic contexts of an individual's or group's needs.

An equity-centered leader makes decisions with the intention of advancing equity in the workplace. Below is a list of habits associated with leaders who center equity in the workplace with examples of what these habits sound like and what they don't sound like.

THE EQUITY-CENTERED LEADER…	SOUNDS LIKE…	DOESN'T SOUND LIKE…
Identifies literacy moments. We uplift words or phrases that are unfamiliar.	*What is an affinity group?*	*I don't like the sound of affinity groups.*
Leverages data. We connect what we see to quantitative and qualitative data.	*We measured less than benchmark on our staff' perception of how supported they feel. Affinity groups may build a space for people to feel supported.*	*I don't think anyone would like to engage in affinity groups.*

Leverages discomfort for inquiry. We acknowledge what we're feeling and how it is showing up. We connect what we're feeling to our identities and positionality.	*Affinity groups makes me uncomfortable – I'm sensing tension in my back. I'm feeling discomfort because historically institutions have grouped people together by race to oppress people living on the margins. As a person of color, I would need to know how we'll engage in these groups in order to feel comfortable.*	*Affinity groups makes me uncomfortable; we should not implement this into our organization.*
Focuses on race and the impact of racism & bias. We combat the natural inclination to explain internal challenges outside of race. We acknowledge that there are multiple factors that contribute to internal challenges – none of which exist absent of race. We consider these additional factors in the context of race.	*Our exponential growth created a barrier to relationship building. Biases are more likely to surface when there are little to no opportunities to develop meaningful relationships.*	*Affinity groups are a great idea but we should focus on relationship building throughout the organization since we've grown so large in size in recent years.*
Honors multiple truths. We will recognize that our individual experiences may vary vastly from the experiences of others.	*A colleague told me they don't want to participate in affinity groups but I have not heard from anyone else. I wonder how we can support them in feeling*	*A colleague told me they don't want to participate in affinity groups so we shouldn't do them.*

	comfortable as we engage in affinity groups.	
Explore what bravery looks like. We don't allow the difficulty of this work to distract from our commitment to equity. We lift what IS difficult to help inform how we will continue to commit to equity.	*Affinity groups may be uncomfortable because it is a new concept for most, so I wonder how we can build comfort amongst the staff.*	*Affinity groups will make too many people uncomfortable.*
Is morally engaged. We respond with our moral compass despite social pressures to participate in or passively comply with familiar policies and actions.	*Though this is not a traditional organizational practice, I recognize the benefits of having affinity groups.*	*We cannot join affinity groups because this is not organizational practice identified in our handbook.*
Holds self accountable. We use suggested changes to policies and practices as an opportunity to assess the ways we are showing up. We acknowledge when our ego clouds our judgement and we hold ourselves accountable to the ways we might have contributed to current challenges.	*Because of the limited number of people of color (POC) on my team, when making working groups, I've "spread" POC out to enhance diversity in the groups. I am now learning that white staff members always have someone to connect with from the same racial group whereas POC do not have these opportunities; I am learning the value of POC having*	*I don't know why people feel unsupported; I create opportunities for all people to develop meaningful relationships through check-ins and relationship building activities.*

	spaces without white people.	
Keeps an open mind. We keep an open mind, especially if equity work is fairly new to us. We communicate an open mind when providing commentary or feedback by using "and" phrases as opposed to "but phrases".	*I understand the benefits to affinity groups and I wonder how we can support everyone towards feeling psychologically safe.*	*I understand the benefits to affinity groups but I don't think people will feel psychologically safe.*