

# Embracing Differences



This toolkit provides an unusual and practical spin on Inclusion and Diversity, sharing research and strategies to embrace differences in order to grow together.

## Top Tips From Stephanie Peltier

Connecting with other human beings and building communities together is a survival need wired into our DNA. It is the diversity present in these relationships that, throughout the evolution of the human species, allowed us to heal, to survive and to thrive.

In life in the 21st century, we are losing our ultra-sociability when engaging with others, especially when they are different from us. This is a consequence of our lifestyle choices and a very primitive brain that is not adapted to the challenges of our current times.

Here are a few tips to embrace differences and enjoy all the benefits of a diverse community both for your physical and emotional wellbeing but also for your success.

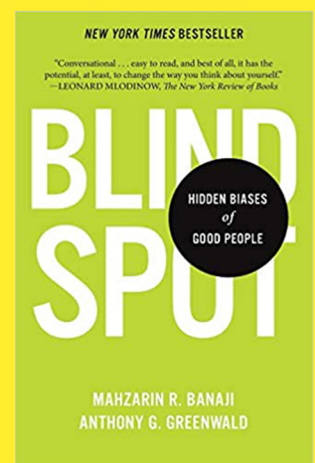
### Seek the unfamiliar

Seek out friendship with people from diverse groups and engage in conversation with "strangers" in order to increase your brain's familiarity with differences and expand your zone of comfort. Scientists call this the "contact hypothesis," the idea that simple contact with others improves your ability to deal with differences—and it's a hypothesis that has been validated by hundreds of studies, and in children as young as three months old.

## Click to Discover More

### BLINDSPOT: HIDDEN BIASES OF GOOD PEOPLE

Check out this brilliant book on the hidden biases of good people by leading psychologists Mahzarin R. Banaji and Anthony G. Greenwald



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## **Choose your motivation system: Approach**

Practice Mindfulness of the breath on a regular basis. Most importantly practice it before engaging with "differences" in order to shift your motivation system from avoidance (where your field of vision is shrunk to identifying only differences and dangers) to approach (where you can see the bigger picture and identify opportunities away from judgement).

## **Find shared identity**

Finding little things we might have in common with others is a very powerful way to relate with others and to start engaging from a place of kindness and compassion. In each of your interactions with others, try to identify these commonalities. If you can't find any, remember that us human beings have 2 things in common: sadly we all have experienced pain and we all desire to be happy.

## **Practice optimism**

As part of your gratitude practice, in order to reshape your brain into embracing differences, make sure that at least one of your gratitude items relates to the benefits of engaging with differences.

Consider that not one of us is born learning how to drive, and yet by the time many people are adults, we find ourselves not even thinking about it even as we expertly manoeuvre the car. One day, with practice, embracing differences, cultivating curiosity might be like driving a car: a skill learned over time but eventually so automatic as to be second nature.