

Becoming Aware

Part One of our Inclusive Leadership in Action Webinar Series

**Inclusive
Leadership
in Action**
webinar series

1

BECOMING AWARE

2

**BECOMING AN ALLY
AND UPSTANDER**

3

**BECOMING A
CHANGE AGENT**

 Simmons University
Institute for
Inclusive Leadership

Moderator Insights

from the desk of

ELISA VAN DAM
VP Allyship & Inclusion

September 2021



Moderator Insights from
ELISA VAN DAM
VP Allyship & Inclusion

I know you want to DO but first you have to BE

When I talk with people about being a more inclusive leader, they immediately want to know what to do. They are looking for specific actions they can take. So during our webinar on Becoming Aware I asked our panelists and our participants to share lots of great ideas for actions you can take. You'll see them in the sidebar. You can find even more in The Inclusive Leader's Playbook.

But before you jump into "doing," it's important to think about "being." Being is how you show up in the world - your attitudes, beliefs, and perspectives. How you approach this work has a major impact on your ability to "do" successfully, and to recover and learn when you aren't as successful. And although it may not feel as immediately satisfying as taking action, cultivating your approach to the work is even more important than the actions you take.

Our panelists shared lots of ideas about the attitudes and approaches they recommend. From my perspective, the three most important are:

- 1 Curiosity**
Curiosity is the secret sauce, and it begins with the motivation to be great at something. You can build your curiosity by setting goals for what you want to learn, and what you want to be more curious about. You can also use situations where something surprises you as a trigger to get curious about what's going on. Ask yourself why the person reacted in a way you didn't anticipate. What data are they seeing that you aren't seeing? What in their history or context is different from yours?
- 2 Grace**
Becoming aware can be hard. You may have to face some truths about yourself, the people around you, and our historical context that bring up feelings of sadness, shame or guilt. You may find it overwhelming at times. Being in a state of grace means acknowledging that there is no perfection, so sometimes you're going to get it wrong. It also means taking care of yourself and others. Sometimes you need to take a break, or give someone else space when they are feeling overtaxed. Give them, and yourself, grace.
- 3 Commitment**
This learning process will never end, so it requires a commitment to keep moving forward, especially when it's challenging. That doesn't mean you have to go it alone - find a partner or a group of people who can support you and help you learn together. You can also help each other stay committed.

Lastly, I want to talk about the importance of reflection. It may not feel like it, but reflection falls into the “doing” category. It is an active practice that I encourage you to engage in systematically because as Stuart Kliman said, reflection is the key to getting better at anything. Our panelists provided some great ideas for how to engage in reflection, including:

When you’re reading a book, ask yourself, what’s the story of inclusion and culture in this book? What can I learn from it? How is this culture similar to my culture? What do I want to bring into the culture that I am part of?

Make reflection a group activity. Bring a group of people together to have provocative conversations and make sense of the environment, the systems, and how to move forward. You can learn from other people, can get feedback when you make mistakes, and support each other through sharing experiences.

Create a prompt for reflection like Liberty Mutual’s red glasses pin - something that prompts you to stop and reflect.

Panelists suggested actions you can take in the next 10 days.



From Dawn Frazier-Bohnert

Take an inventory to help you understand how you’ve shaped your life and your worldview. Without judgement, ask yourself questions like:

- Who is in my network? Who do I socialize with? Who is in my community?
- What was I taught about different social identities?
- What movies, books, and other media do I tend to like?

Once you have that inventory, think about how you can expand your knowledge and your worldview.



From Stuart Kliman

Empathize with someone else’s experience. Imagine the experience of someone you know, a person on the street, or someone you’ve read about. Think about the different inputs they receive, the environment they experience, and the impacts that they have.

And if you’re surprised by what you imagine, ask yourself why would I be surprised by that? And how can I gain more knowledge and understanding?



From Dr. Lynn Perry Wooten

Take a “field trip” to learn about a different culture. You could:

- Read a book, watch a new TV show or movie, listen to a podcast or a new radio station
- Have an intimate conversation with someone from a different culture to understand their perspective
- Visit a museum or historic site

ELISA VAN DAM
VP Allyship & Inclusion

Elisa van Dam brings a wealth of experience in gender equity and inclusion to her role as head of the Allyship and Inclusion practice area.

Elisa works with organizations and individual leaders to increase their understanding and practice of inclusive leadership behaviors. In collaboration with other Institute Fellows, she creates and delivers research-based content and programming, based on our proprietary framework that demystifies the [Work of the Inclusive Leader™](#).

Elisa also maintains a private coaching practice, working with women on how to successfully navigate maternity leave. She is an IPEC Certified Professional Coach and holds an ICF (International Coach Federation), ACC certification. She is also a Gallup-Certified Strengths Coach.

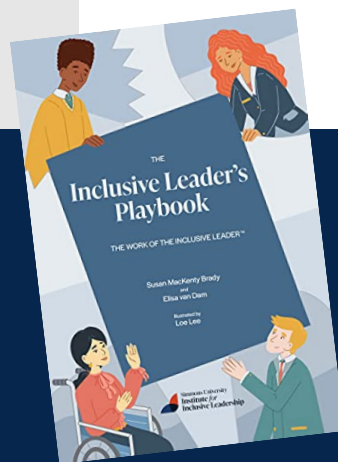
Elisa van Dam is the co-author of *The Inclusive Leader's Playbook: The Work of the Inclusive Leader*.

Participant Suggestions

- ✓ Practice being curious with intention
- ✓ Help others become aware and take a field trip
- ✓ Learn about a new culture then share that with my team and encourage them to do the same
- ✓ Read *My Grandmother's Hands* by Resmaa Menakem
- ✓ Dive deeper into circles where people self-identify, as many identities may be invisible (*such as disabilities*)
- ✓ Build out my Twitter feed to include a broader range of identities...I want to hear what they're saying!
- ✓ Think about my values and how EDI is part of them
- ✓ Cultivate curiosity by asking myself - What do I want to learn today to drive curiosity and get to know my new team on a more personal level
- ✓ Read *Blindspot: Hidden Biases of Good People* by Mahzarin R. Banaji
- ✓ Join an ERG group as an ally to better understand the experiences of people in that group. Step back and listen.

This easy-to-use guide offers a wealth of tips and techniques for fostering a mindset of inclusion and creating a culture of equity in your organization. It will help you increase engagement, foster creativity and innovation, and benefit from all of the talent in your organization.

Available on Amazon.



SIMMONS UNIVERSITY
**Institute for
Inclusive Leadership**

Our goal is to manifest equity in leadership in our lifetime by fostering gender parity and cultures of inclusion. We offer innovative research, events and leadership programming that empower inclusive leaders at all levels.

To learn more visit: www.inclusiveleadership.com