



Management

The Manager's Guide to Inclusive Leadership — Small Habits That Make a Big Impact

respond to the Black Lives Matter movement and learn more about how they can be anti-racist. From revisiting hiring practices to organizing internal conversations about race and allyship, there's now a pressure to act quickly in an industry that's thus far moved pretty slowly when it comes to investing in inclusion," says [Vanessa Tanicien](#).

Tanicien is well suited to help companies that are ready to tackle this work. As a leadership trainer and facilitator at [LifeLabs Learning](#), she and her colleagues partner with 700+ companies like Slack, Peloton and Warby Parker to deliver research-driven programs that train managers and teams on how to master the most essential leadership skills and habits in the shortest time.

"At LifeLabs, we're focused on the smallest changes that have the biggest impact," she says. "To be clear, there are critical systems-level changes needed to combat bias and racism in everything from education and product building to hiring and performance reviews. But in addition, leaders also have the opportunity to be anti-racist and inclusive in their daily interactions — something that can help keep this work centered and sustained."

Along with fellow leadership trainer [Massella Dukuly](#), LifeLabs co-CEO [Tania Luna](#), facilitation lead [Dr. Vaneeta Sandhu](#) and Tanicien (virtually) stopped by the First Round community recently for a tactical discussion on why and how leaders can become more deliberately inclusive. Given the much-needed push for change that has been taking place in the tech industry, we thought we'd share our notes from this internal conversation with a wider audience here on the Review. (Fair warning, we took *lots* of notes.)

From the immediate need to hold space for Black employees right now and lead vulnerable discussions with your team, to the long-term behaviors that build a welcoming culture, the team at LifeLabs distills inclusive leadership into its four most essential habits. For each of these high-impact behaviors, Dukuly, Luna, Sandhu and

WHY THE “I” IN DEI MATTERS AND WHAT IT ACTUALLY MEANS:

When it comes to Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) strategies, [companies tend to](#) concentrate their energy on hiring and sharing reports about “diversity data” instead of examining the existing dynamics within their own walls. Since the former deals in numbers, and the latter involves squishier concepts like belonging, the “I” in the acronym is too often left out.

And that has a real impact on everything from performance to retention. “As humans, our brains are wired for bias. This means that we have to be intentional and systematic about welcoming diversity and establishing equity and inclusion,” says trainer Massella Dukuly. “You can’t just assume inclusion will sprout organically once you’ve introduced more diversity.”

To get started on that work, Co-CEO Tania Luna emphasizes that it’s important to first redefine leadership. “Leadership isn’t saying, ‘Follow me. I’ll take you somewhere.’ It’s about what happens when I leave. Are you even more effective than you were before? Are people bringing out the best in one another? Generally, what we see in research is when groups of people work together, we all start putting in less effort — an effect first [discovered by psychologist Max Ringelmann](#),” she says.

“Great leadership is about catalyzing more effort, engagement and productivity. It’s creating a formula where $1+1 = 3$. In many ways, this happens as a result of typically small, invisible acts of inclusion — giving credit for work, asking to hear other perspectives, or simply following up to say thank you,” Luna continues. “But **focusing on the small things is quite unnatural for us**. Sure, inclusion can also look like wearing or posting symbols of allyship and publicly stating your commitment to using your privilege



Here's a simple definition: Inclusive leaders leave every person and every room better than they found it.

When facilitating workshops, Vanessa Tanicien also finds it's helpful to highlight the opposite of inclusion so we can learn by contrast. "We humans default to, 'Who do I trust here?' or 'Who do I have a good relationship with?' or 'Who am I sitting next to?' and then pull those people into rooms for conversations to solve problems or share info. All these tiny micro exclusions add up without us even realizing," she says. **"This tendency to lean on the people we already know and like is amplified in the remote space where spontaneous collisions are less frequent."**

In contrast, inclusion is about bringing others into the fold. "It's about sourcing the thoughts and feelings of others so we can come up with solutions that benefit the whole. It requires extra intention to empower the people around you and give everyone equal access to those opportunities for growth and contribution," says Tanicien.

To unpack how managers can incorporate these principles of inclusive leadership more practically, the LifeLabs group breaks it down into these four habits:



Invite and display authenticity



Build self-awareness and curiosity

Lift up other perspectives consistently

“Handling difficult conversations with care and authenticity is most top of mind right now, so we’ll dive into that first. But while this might be the pressing work in the near-term, the other three habits are absolutely crucial for *sustaining* change and getting out of our pattern of reacting in the short-term and easing up as more days and weeks go by,” says Luna.

INCLUSIVE LEADERSHIP HABIT #1: INVITE AND DISPLAY AUTHENTICITY:

One of the most pressing responsibilities of leaders right now is to make it safe for employees to speak up about their unique needs and experiences. But that’s easier said than done.

“We often hear these slogans in the workplace, like ‘Come as you are,’ or ‘Bring your whole self.’ But the point of those messages shouldn’t just be about wearing a wacky outfit to the office and everyone being cool with it,” says Luna. “More concretely, it’s about the ability to give upward feedback, ask for what you need, admit mistakes and reveal aspects of who you are that don’t fit the dominant culture — without getting punished. For example many Black people today are still told that wearing their hair naturally is ‘unprofessional.’”

In many workplaces, conforming is a survival tactic. “The choice becomes: fit in or deal with having fewer opportunities for growth, connection and contribution, and perhaps even risk your job security. Research by [Claude Steele](#) and many others has revealed that this pressure to conform is heaviest on individuals from marginalized groups, leading to chronic stress, disengagement and a loss of productivity,” says Luna. “In short, when



Vanessa Tanicien, Leadership Trainer and Facilitator at LifeLabs Learning

Tanicien digs into the very personal underside of not showing up authentically:

“Somewhere along the way, people decided that there's a certain way to be and act in order to be liked at the office. Unfortunately, people-pleasing is one of the deepest forms of manipulation that exists. You're essentially figuring out how to get people to like you in a way that's disingenuous to yourself, creating distance between 'work you' and the person that you see yourself to be. That's why I decided a long time ago that I wasn't going to wear this mask to work.”

Tanicien also notes that as [we adapt to working remotely](#), our ability to keep up this charade is now more challenging than ever. “This is due to something called [integration versus segmentation](#). Your identities were previously physically segmented. You used to leave your house, walk to the train or get in your car and then arrive at the office and

So keeping up those emotional barriers is much harder. It takes a lot of mental energy to maintain that divide when there are no more cues to let the brain know that it's in one place versus another. This new level of integration pushes people to **be more real and show up in ways they haven't before**. As a leader, you have to be prepared for that. It's your opportunity to show that people's real selves are welcome here. Not only will inviting authenticity increase engagement, it will also allow you to meet people's real needs."

The silver lining to this environment we're all sharing right now is that people are forced to vulnerably connect and actually have real conversations — we have nowhere to hide, folks.

With that context in mind, the LifeLabs team outlines three specific suggestions for how leaders can meet this moment by both displaying and inviting authenticity:

1. Check in before checking on.

Many might be feeling an impulse to check on the Black people in their lives and ask how they're doing. But you've also probably seen articles and helpful Instagram posts that flag why this may not be a one-size-fits-all solution.

"As a Black woman in America, I have gotten a lot of those texts. And some of them were more well received than others. I'm definitely not speaking for all Black Americans here, but this is how I'd explain what makes the good messages different: They come from an authentic place," says Tanicien. "They come from people you've already been talking to,



Massella Dukuly, Leadership Trainer at LifeLabs Learning

Dukuly (who is also a Black woman) added on: “From my perspective, I still want to be your friend. I don't want you to start treating me differently or want you to feel that we need to have this weird interaction,” she says. “I want depth to these conversations, and that depth should be proportionate to the already-existent relationship. ‘I'm here if you'd like to talk,’ only works if in fact we have previously truly talked. If you're a former co-worker I haven't spoken to in three years, do you actually want me to call you up and start talking about systematic oppression? Probably not.”

When studying what makes great managers different, the LifeLabs team's research shows there's a big difference between leading questions and authentic questions. Dukuly and Tanicien break down this nuance: “**The best leaders ask questions they genuinely want to know the answers to.** To do that, stop and check in with yourself: Why am I

If you're choosing to reach out to a Black person right now, choose to connect — not do a drive by.

Of course, leaders have a responsibility to check in because demonstrating care and concern is part of the job. “A good rule to follow with all employees is to **‘check in before checking on.’** In other words, make space for feelings and human connection before turning the conversation to work. It’s an opportunity to provide personalized support.”

To navigate these check-in conversations thoughtfully, the LifeLabs team offers the following tips for your 1:1 meetings:

What to say:

How are you, really? Are you sleeping?

What would be the most helpful use of this time? Would you like to talk about what’s going on in the world? We can talk about what you’re experiencing, focus on work, or just take a break.

What’s one thing I can do to make work easier for you right now?

What not to say:

I can't believe this is happening.

I know exactly what you're going through.

I feel so guilty.

At least racism isn't happening at work.

I'm sure it will get better soon.

How to respond:

Acknowledge: I hear you. Thanks for sharing that.

Ask: Do you want to say more about that?

2. Create deliberate space for conversation.



Tania Luna, Co-CEO of LifeLabs Learning

Outside of 1:1 check-ins, company-wide or small group discussions also offer a chance to demonstrate inclusive leadership. “It’s vital to approach the topic of race with respect for the weightiness and nuance of centuries of pain and oppression,” says Luna. **“But fears of not knowing how to broach the subject or saying the wrong thing can keep conversations at a surface level — or prevent them from happening altogether.”**

Here are the tips to keep in mind as you approach these conversations:

Take an active role: “Silence sends an unintended signal, leaving employees to interpret it in their own way — often seeing no message as a sign of disinterest, fear, or lack of care. To quote my coworker, [Ashley Schwedt](#), **inaction is still action**,” says Luna. “When having these conversations around bias, microaggressions and exclusion, it’s really important that leaders don’t just hope that everyone figures it out on their own.” Her colleague Dr. Vaneeta Sandhu builds on this point: “Take an active role in those conversations. Invite managers to post articles, blog posts, podcasts, personal stories and discussion prompts. If we want employees to learn more, we have to advertise our own learning,” she says.

Create the space: “Asking employees to be real, present and authentic *at work* goes hand-in-hand with acknowledging and making space for the very real impact of events *outside of work*,” says Luna. “[The email](#) from Isaac Oates, the CEO of Justworks is a

Embrace discomfort: “At our LifeLabs internal team meeting, our colleague [Robleh Kirce](#) reminded us that we need to choose courage over comfort. Instead of fearing that we'll say the 'wrong thing,' trust that we'll give each other feedback if we do — that's the only way we'll learn to show up for each other,” says Luna.

Expect discomfort, and don't let it hold you back. Look at it as the price of admission to making progress. Use it as a signal to push you to learn more.

3. Show vulnerability — but set intentions and draw boundaries



Dr. Vaneeta Sandhu, Facilitation Lead at LifeLabs Learning


It's hypocritical for leaders to ask for authenticity and vulnerability without walking the talk themselves. People need to see this behavior modeled to believe you when you say you really want them to be themselves and say what's on their mind.

But while the [power of vulnerability](#) is increasingly understood, figuring out how that translates to your day-to-day horizon is tricky. One place to start is **owning up to mistakes**, says Sandhu. "In our research, we noticed that leaders who score high on influence skills share when they made a mistake and what they've learned from it. Mistakes are necessary. When we were kids and we touched the hot burner, we got burned and learned not to do that again. Mistakes are sometimes what it takes for our brains to get the learning encoded," she says.

We're all going to make mistakes. I've been researching inclusion for 12 years now, and I made at least four mistakes in the last seven days.

the world since COVID-19 hit. At one point in the conversation, she said, **'I wonder how much you've been talking versus I've been talking.'** I was focused on myself rather than focusing on another person."

In these vulnerable discussions with your team, remind yourself you don't have to have all the answers. **"We need to unlearn this idea that we have to have an answer for everything,"** says Dukuly. "If a leader can share things like, 'Here's how I've messed up,' or, 'I'm also scared, but here's what I do know and how I'm going to be part of it with you,' it'll go such a long way."



We underestimate our teams when we assume that they will demand all the facts or an ironclad plan. People are often just looking for signs of a caring culture — that we'll be here for them and that, if something's wrong, we'll create an avenue for them to share that.

But as a leader, **opening up doesn't mean freely unloading.** "There's an art to being credible and vulnerable or 'messy' at the same time. We now have decades of research, beginning with Elliot Aronson's [study](#) on what's called the pratfall effect, revealing that when people are highly competent, making blunders actually makes them more likable and approachable," says Luna. "That said, this effect only holds true if you've already earned people's respect by being credible, reliable and competent."

What's more is that leaders need to stay mindful of **emotional contagion — the tendency for a leader's mood to be "caught" by others on the team.** "As humans, we're biofeedback machines for each other. We feel what others are feeling. [Affective](#)

for readers to [model and normalize feelings](#) — without hanging those feelings on others and leaving everyone to comfort you. You can say, ‘Hey, just want to flag that I’m feeling really sad today, so I might come across as less engaged, but I’m hanging in there and really want to be here.’”

Tanicien agrees. “**I don’t advocate for leaders to be vulnerable without intention.** Adding additional context is critical, especially when we’re [working at a distance in this virtual setting](#). Otherwise, people might attribute a negative reason for why you choose to do or share something. It’s [Hanlon’s razor](#) at work,” she says.

“Give people the reason at the outset by using **intention statements**. Use phrases like, ‘I’m sharing this because,’ or ‘Here’s why I think you need to know this.’ For example, instead of just saying ‘Sorry I’m a bit distracted today,’ say ‘I’m a bit distracted today, and I’m telling you this because I want to make sure I’m not causing any anxiety by how I might be acting. Or you can just come right out and say, ‘I’m feeling down today, and I’m sharing that so it’s clear that it’s okay for all of us to have our bad days.’”

INCLUSIVE LEADERSHIP HABIT #2: BUILD SELF-AWARENESS AND CURIOSITY:

But it’s not enough to simply make space for conversations around bias, inclusion and anti-racism. Inclusive leaders also put in the work to build their own self-awareness. The simple truth is that while most people want to be [more self-aware](#), many of us aren’t. It’s hard to pragmatically sharpen this key skill. The LifeLabs team breaks down key questions and important reminders as you work to bolster this core behavior.

1. Ask these questions of your past, present and future selves.

“An inclusive leader is aware of their own biases and understands that even if you’re a loving, thoughtful, ‘woke’ person, we are all biased. If you have a brain, you’re biased.

...ing," says Luky.

Here are the questions (and the context) the LifeLabs crew recommends leaning on as you look to unearth your own missteps:

Past self: Look back. Starting with your relationships at work, reflect on times when you could have done more to include or advocate for others. Ask: When have I failed to show up for others? Have I witnessed microaggressions and failed to defend a teammate? Is there a time when I actively contributed to making someone feel excluded? What can I learn from these experiences to do better next time?

Present self: Identify and deblur in the moment. "As clinician and author [Resmaa Menakem points out](#), bias manifests in your body. When there's a positive bias, we tend to relax or kind of lean in. When there's a negative bias, we tense up," says Luna. "Observe your reaction and ask yourself: 'Why did I just get tense? Would I still feel that way if it were someone else?' For example, let's say that I have a Black female coworker and my brain is telling me, 'She's coming across as really aggressive,' then a good question to ask myself to build awareness might be, 'Well, would I still feel that way about a white coworker if they were doing the same thing? How about a male coworker? If not, what's causing that reaction in me?' At LifeLabs, we call these **blur word questions**. If I'm saying or thinking something 'blurry' like, 'That person's not professional,' or 'They don't seem experienced,' I stop to ask: What does ____ mean to me? What is the impact I'm actually concerned about?"

Future self: Spot gaps before they form. "Leaders often get hyper-focused on one group within their org. For example, they dive so deep into improving gender parity that they don't look at anything else. Bam, their bias pops up," says Dukuly. "Do a self-check. Ask: What am I focused on primarily right now and how might other gaps form down the road as a result? For example, when focusing on hiring more women in the workplace, am I forgetting BIPOC, queer, or trans women? You don't need a firm

2. Ask these questions of others to consistently practice curiosity.

“Leaders often hear about the importance of demonstrating an open mindset. One way to practice that is by asking questions that are focused on others,” says Sandhu. “This is a simple gateway to growing our self-awareness.”

Great leaders find a way to listen and ask questions more often than they're talking and giving answers.

To consistently practice curiosity as a leader, regularly ask questions like:

What were you hoping I'd speak to in that meeting that I didn't? This question allows you to keep closing gaps between your experience and the experiences of others.

What's important to you about that? If someone's talking to you about something they need or feel passionately about, don't dive right into how you can help or whether it's a good idea. That way you can better tailor your support.

What else? “The first response is usually a baseline answer, the ‘I'm fine’ to your ‘How are you?’ To take conversations to the next level, ask questions that require you to go



Dr. Vaneeta Sandhu facilitating a LifeLabs training session

3. Direct your own learning — and make sure you're absorbing it.

But getting curious doesn't always mean having conversations. "I'm a huge advocate of doing tons of self work. There's lots of resources to look at. And yes, the internet is a big swath of information that can feel overwhelming," says Tanicien. "But push against that by picking one topic and deciding to really tackle it. Make it an active experience by asking yourself along the way: **What am I learning? When can I actually apply it? Why is it important to me? Who can I share it with?**

People spend a lot of time consuming information, but not actually learning it. Dedicate time to getting curious

INCLUSIVE LEADERSHIP HABIT #3: SEEK OUT AND RESPOND WELL TO FEEDBACK:

Receiving [feedback](#) is the key that unlocks self-awareness and allows us to provide tailored support, so it's an important tool in the inclusive leader's toolkit. But it's often solicited and received poorly. The LifeLabs team points out common pitfalls and serves up useful tactics for getting better here:

1. Start by focusing on the purpose and intent.

We often hear statements like, 'Feedback is an important value here.' But the intention behind that and how people *actually* perceive feedback is often less clear, " says Dukuly. "That's why it's helpful for leaders to explicitly state things like, 'When we give and receive feedback here, it's to enable learning and growth and redefine our preconceived notions.'"

Ambiguous intentions might explain why you're hearing crickets after asking for feedback from your team. "We've all asked, 'Anyone have any feedback for me?' and then got, 'Nope, all good,' in response, which can be disappointing if you were hoping to get more than that," says Sandhu.

"Folks might be misinterpreting the intention behind your ask or have anxiety around it, maybe because they've been burned in the past by managers who asked for feedback then responded poorly to it. That's why it can be really helpful to attach an intention statement. Simple phrases like 'To help me keep improving...,' or 'I'm really trying to communicate more clearly about decision-making. What could I do better?' can be really helpful."

of exclusion might be and understand how we can remedy it," says Dukuly.

"A tactical practice I love from LifeLabs is what we call the **scaling question**. A quick example is: 'On a scale of one to 10, how well do you think I facilitated that meeting? Most of the time, you'll usually hear seven or eight, because they're uncomfortable saying anything beyond that,'" Dukuly says.

"That's why the second question is magic: **What would it take to increase that score by one point?** Then maybe I'll hear something like, 'You could have called on people more to include other voices.' This is important for two reasons. One, giving people greater safety to be able to express themselves increases engagement and commitment. Two, it also gives us micro steps we can then act on to build trust and improve inclusion."

Scaling questions have the power to turn abstract ideas into measurable, actionable feedback. The impact happens through the smallness of the second question.

Here's another example: If your direct report seems overwhelmed, ask how stressed they are feeling on a scale from one to 10. Say they answer 8. Use these scaling questions to pinpoint how you can help:

What could move you from a 8 to an 7?

What keeps the score from being worse?

When was the last time the score felt good? What was different about that time? How can we apply that today?

When it comes to inclusion, some specific areas to seek feedback around are:

Meeting quality

Opportunities for growth and learning

Opportunities for contribution

Developmental feedback quality

Clarity of performance expectations

Access to information

Feeling that one's perspectives are heard and valued

3. Level up how you respond.

But it's not enough to get better at ferreting out the feedback you need. To up your inclusive leadership game, concentrate on how you can make improvements in responding to feedback you receive.


"We've all been in a position where we've given somebody feedback who said they wanted it, but then you realize they definitely didn't want to hear what you had to say," says Tanicien.

Luna adds: "As 'White Fragility' author Robin DiAngelo [points out](#), white people in particular are usually socialized to avoid direct feedback conversations about racism, so white leaders need to put in extra care to receive the message well and let the feedback sink in."


For LifeLabs, the key elements of responding well to feedback include being able to:



Say thank you



Ask for examples



Ask about the impact



Come up with an action plan

Follow up (quickly) to show how you've implemented the feedback and ask for more

Here are two more specific tactics to help you put those elements into practice:

Get a high second score.

"Adam Grant popularized this concept of [responding to feedback](#) by thinking about the Second Score: When someone's giving you feedback, they've already made a judgement, and it's out of your control. But you can control how you respond to what they're telling you — it's another opportunity to be judged well. Grant frames it in terms of getting an A-plus for how well you take that D-minus," says Luna.

"This is particularly important when it comes to handling what seem like scary conversations around racism, bias and exclusion. So much of our energy is spent on, *'Oh my gosh, what did I do?'* or *'I think I was misunderstood.'* A more powerful mindset is, **'This is my chance to show this person that I'm going to hear them. I'm going to learn from them. I'm going to give them space to express what they're feeling and needing.'** While you may be panic-thinking, *'Are they right? What do I do with this?'* instead, ask yourself, *'How can I reward the fact that they mustered the courage to come talk to me? How can I make sure they feel great about the conversation we just had?'* Your goal should be to leave them feeling encouraged to give you and others feedback in the future."

Broadcast what you heard.

"Here's something I've picked up from one of the leaders we studied at LifeLabs: Any time she would get critical feedback from someone on her team, she would — with permission — advertise it broadly," says Luna.

now implemented for my own benefit. When a community member gave me feedback, I included it in the postscript of the weekly newsletter that goes out to the LifeLabs community, saying something like, *'P.S. I recently got this piece of feedback and here's what I've learned from that comment.'* Actions like this help normalize asking for and getting feedback — and encourage others to give you more feedback. It also allows you to share learnings with the group, which can be particularly impactful in times like these when we're trying to educate ourselves on how to be more inclusive."



Massella Dukuly facilitating a LifeLabs training session

INCLUSIVE LEADERSHIP HABIT #4: LIFT UP OTHER PERSPECTIVES CONSISTENTLY

The final habit of inclusive leaders is ensuring there's equal airtime and opportunity. "Inclusive leaders are very deliberate about the equality of their communication. Even when it comes to something like small talk. We tend to do this with the people who we feel most comfortable with, but inclusive leaders go out of their way to check in with those they aren't already close to," says Dukuly.

Create spaces in meetings for every person to get airtime to share their ideas, says Sandhu. “Extroverted folks, those who've been on the team the longest, and members of dominant identity groups often get their perspectives heard more than others. Leaders need to pay attention to these dynamics, from how women and people of color are often overlooked, to how folks who are remote, newer to the team, ELL (English Language Learners), or more introverted can find it tough to speak up,” she says.

To get more tactical, Sandhu offers some tools that are helpful here:

One is to **create thinking time**. “That could be as simple as saying, ‘Before we all answer, let's all jot down our thoughts.’ That's great for people who are operating in their non-native language, for introverts, for those who are neurodivergent and so many other groups.”

“Another effective tool is a forced turn-taking mechanism like a **timed round-robin**, where you say, ‘We're all going to go around and share a question or an answer for two minutes each. Feel free to say pass.’ There's a lot of research, for example, in the surgical world — popularized by Atul Gawande — that shows if surgical teams start surgery with a round-robin, nurses are much more likely to speak up in the midst of surgery and potentially give lifesaving, critical feedback.”

Ritual questions are also impactful. Make a habit of ending key points in a meeting with questions such as, “Who haven't we heard from yet?” and “What are two additional perspectives we haven't considered?”

While preventing interruptions in the midst of an engaged conversation — especially a virtual one — can be counterproductive, one thing leaders can do is **track**

It's not enough to make sure everyone has a seat at the table — inclusive leaders make sure everyone gets airtime, too.

2. Tackle microaggressions, head on.

“This is something that is particularly challenging right now. There's a growing understanding of the weight and pain of what are often called microaggressions in social psychology — a term first coined by Chester Pierce. These are seemingly small comments or actions like, ‘Where are you really from?’ (said to a non-white coworker) ‘You look like a real woman!’ (said to a transgender coworker) or ‘You're so articulate,’ (said to a Black coworker). These are often unconscious signals we send to people that they don't belong or that we hold low expectations for them. Author [Ibram X. Kendi](#) goes so far as to call them ‘racial abuse,’” says Luna.

“Leaders bear a huge responsibility here. If you're serious about being more inclusive, you can't sweep comments like that under the rug. **When you encounter microaggressions, you need to meet them with micro-interventions,**” she says.

“There is so much talk of being anti-racist right now. It's concrete actions like these that actually challenge the normalcy and invisibility of daily racism.”

Start by preparing before it happens by thinking about how you'll respond. “What will you say out loud? In what instances will you jump in and say something in public and in what instances will you give feedback in private?” says Luna.

says Luna. “You could also point to the individual who made the microaggression.” At LifeLabs, we use [this short video](#) in our Behaviors of Inclusion training to demonstrate how it might look, but essentially you can say, ‘Can we talk about that comment you made? I noticed that when you said XYZ, the other person didn't engage as much afterwards. I've been there and I've said stuff before that didn't land like I intended. Would you be up for talking about it?’” says Luna.

“The bottom line is that you need to make a plan for how you're going to show up as a more inclusive leader — otherwise you very likely won't. As is often said in the world of DEI, if we don't intentionally include, we will unintentionally exclude. And we simply cannot afford to keep doing that.”

Looking for more resources? Check out LifeLabs' [open-sourced DEI playbook here](#).

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ENGINEERING



The Best Advice We Overheard at First Round's CTO Unconference

Our second annual CTO Unconference brought together 160+ of the sharpest technical leaders we know. Here's a rundown of some of the best tactics we heard them share.