

The problem

The definition of a safe space can mean different things to different people.

For many, feeling unsafe results from 'triggers' brought on by a specific situation, expectation, or conversation. These triggers are sometimes heightened by physical and neuro-diverse conditions, and cultural backgrounds.

If we don't have a robust understanding of our work-mates' triggers, it can lead to them suffering from emotional, mental and physical distress. It can also discourage people from talking about how they feel and raising their concerns if they don't have access to a space or situation which they personally deem as being 'safe'.

"I've been nominated for an award and asked to travel by train to speak at a ceremony in London. I'm claustrophobic and a very insular person. The anticipation of the journey and being on stage frightens me."

Belonging at GC:
a safe and inclusive place to thrive

A checklist of things to consider to ensure safe spaces



Environment

- make sure spaces are not too cramped.
- the temperature is comfortable.
- ensure there are clearly defined exits.
- don't assume everyone is comfortable using public transport.
- think about where you hold conversations, is it suitable - i.e. open office vs confidential.



Reasonable Adjustments

- plan to support biological processes, health conditions and disabilities - such as menopause, anxiety and mobility problems.
- try to accommodate existing/established working patterns.



Personal circumstances

- consider parental and caring responsibilities.
- be aware of any activities/discussions which may upset people due to a recent life event - i.e. bereavement, baby loss, redundancy.



Topic of conversations and expectations

- make the subjects and discussion areas relevant to all, make them inclusive.
- don't assume that everyone is comfortable speaking, or being 'name dropped' in public.
- not everyone will be OK with sharing their views in the presence of senior managers.



Religion & Beliefs

- be aware of any current festivals or celebrations, especially if they involve food abstinence.
- consider prayer times, especially for out-of-hours events.
- remember: alcohol is prohibited in some religions.



Identity, Gender & Sexuality

- use colleagues' pronouns.
- use gender-inclusive language which recognises the fluid and varied nature of gender.

Start to take action

Know your team on an individual basis - well enough to make informed choices. Understand what makes them tick, what's right and wrong for them, and what triggers them. This can include coaching and goal setting, and having brave conversations.

- Don't make any assumptions... think before you speak
- Take the time in kit meetings and team meetings: Practice active listening
- Support colleagues and establish a Wellness Action Plan.
- Look out for our 'Cultural Competence Training' for managers - coming soon...
- Research and get tips and approaches for reasonable adjustments. Book on to our Disability Inclusion Manager Workshop.