

WORKING WITH PEOPLE DIFFERENT FROM OURSELVES

Workplaces are becoming more diverse than ever. There are people spanning three generations, people of many different cultures and religions, people from the rainbow community and people of many different abilities, all working side by side in the workforce. There are also more women working in jobs that used to be just for men.

As a result, feeling comfortable and confident to work in a diverse workplace has become important right across New Zealand.

How prepared are you to work with people different to yourself?

Answer the following questions and take time to reflect on how well you do.

1. **You are asked to do an all-day delivery job with a person who is about the same age as your parents and of a different gender to yourself. How would you feel?**
 - a. Really uncomfortable. I wouldn't do it.
 - b. Pretty uncomfortable. I would try and find an excuse not to do it.
 - c. Uncomfortable. I would ask whether it was possible to have someone of my own age and/or gender to work with.
 - d. OK but not particularly happy. It would be a long day.
 - e. I would be fine. I would see it as an opportunity to learn some new things from them.



2. **You arrive at work for your first day on the job. You were happy to get this job at the local i-SITE, but as you walk in the door, you notice that everyone is much older than you. How do you feel?**
- a. I would feel angry and disappointed. I would look for another job because this one would be boring. Not much fun having to work with a bunch of old people.
 - b. I would be upset as I'm quite shy, so it would be hard to make friends or have any fun. Also, I think they would all be judging me for being so young and inexperienced.
 - c. I would feel a bit bummed out because I was so happy to get the job, but now it seems like a dull workplace. I would try to make the best of it. I don't think you have to have friends at work; just be friendly.
 - d. I would be OK after all it's a job and a good stepping stone for other jobs. I would try to find someone in the team who could be a bit of fun.
 - e. It wouldn't bother me at all. I would be proud that I got the job when everyone else seems older and more experienced. I would do my best to be friendly to everyone.



3. **You've got a fruit picking job in Hastings. Your supervisor is of a different culture and gender to yourself. They are serious and determined that you will work hard all day. You get told off for mucking around and warned that if you don't settle down, you will be sent home. How would you take this?**
- a. I would think the supervisor is racist.
 - b. I would wonder whether the supervisor might be picking on me because I am of a different culture / gender.
 - c. I would unwillingly accept being told off, but I'd watch out to see if I'm the only one being picked on.
 - d. I would accept the telling off but think that the warning was a bit over the top.
 - e. I would settle down and focus on the work and not give any thought to the race issue.



4. **If you were the only person of your culture at your work (e.g. the only Māori, Samoan, Pakeha or Somalian), do you think this would affect how well you might fit in or how comfortable you would feel working there?**
- a. Absolutely! Without doubt, I would not be comfortable with it.
 - b. Probably. I would feel uncomfortable and uneasy.
 - c. Maybe. Depends how friendly people were towards me. Even then, it would not be the same as having people of my culture working with me.
 - d. Not really. I think it would depend more on the attitude of the workplace and how much effort people make to include me and respect my cultural values.
 - e. I would feel perfectly comfortable. I don't think my being of another culture should influence how others treat me, although I do appreciate having my values respected and included. I have friends of many cultures and feel like I fit in. It's about how people behave towards you that's important.



5. **Your company is holding a conference, and you've been asked to greet people as they arrive at the venue. Your job includes signing them in, taking their coats and handing out goody bags. A co-worker in a wheelchair has been assigned to the same task. How do you feel about this?**
- a. A bit unhappy, as I feel like I'd end up doing most of the work.
 - b. A little worried. I would want to do a good job, and I would worry about being able to manage everything, as well as trying to share the work with my partner in the wheelchair.
 - c. OK. To be honest, it would be easier to work with someone not limited by a wheelchair, but I'm sure we'd work it out, even if I had to do a bit extra.
 - d. I would be fine. We would work out who would do what and get on with it.
 - e. I would be happy to do this. We would manage the job well, and I would learn some new things from my workmate about how things can be done differently – and maybe even better!



6. Your new work buddy is from Indonesia. You are aware she is the only Indonesian, and also the only Muslim person, in the workplace. She doesn't know anyone well yet, and you want to make sure she feels really welcomed. What are three things you can do to make sure she feels welcome and that she belongs?

1.

2.

3.



7. **What do you think are the most important values that workplaces should have to make sure everyone feels included and valued?**
- a. Allowing people to do their jobs without feeling hassled or bullied.
 - b. Ensuring that people are respected.
 - c. Ensuring that people are respected and that their abilities identity (age, sexuality, gender, etc), along with their cultural and religious values and beliefs, are appreciated and accepted.
 - d. Ensuring that people's values and beliefs are respected and welcomed, and giving everyone the same opportunities to develop their skills and be promoted.
 - e. All of the above, plus having a workplace that celebrates diversity rather than just accepting it.



What are three things you have learned about yourself while doing this activity?

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____