



# ARE FAIRNESS CONCERNS PREVENTING EQUITY ACTION? MOVING TOWARD A CULTURE OF ACCESSIBILITY

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Realize Canada

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Disability and Employment

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# ABOUT YOUR PRESENTER

**ANNA-LIZA  
BADALOO (SHE/HER)**



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# Intersections

- Racialized (Indo-Caribbean)
- Woman
- Queer (pansexual)
- Neurodiverse
- First generation of my family born in Canada
- Young Gen X
- Person with an episodic disability

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# Work and Impact

- Working at the intersection of health, environment, and social justice
- Sustainability Network: Vision2030 Associate leading JEDI Programs for the environmental non-profit sector
- Anemochory Consulting (Founder): By leveraging empathy with a decolonized, intersectional lens, we amplify traditionally silenced voices and help foster inclusive workplaces where all employees feel a sense of belonging.

# PSYCHOLOGICAL SAFETY AND EVOLUTION



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# The Need For Safety Is Deeply Ingrained

- Social animals became social to create and maintain safety.
- At first: Protection from other species.
- Now: Protection from other humans that we deem dangerous.
- Questions: Who is safe? Who is worthy?
- Answer: Our culture tells us.

# INTERNALIZING CULTURAL BELIEFS AND EVOLUTION



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# Maintaining Safety Before You Can Think About It

- Internalizing the beliefs of our culture is a necessary stage of development.
- It's our gut response to who is safe and who is worthy.
- Generational experiences are vital.
- Question: How do we uncover our internalized beliefs?
- Answer: Watch our automatic responses and thoughts without judgment, then reflect.



# FAIRNESS AND EVOLUTION



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# Not Just For Humans

- Dr. Sarah Brosnan, PhD has explored how primates deal with fairness.
- Monkeys will refuse a lesser treat only when another monkey is given a more valuable treat.
- Assessing fairness is a natural process that we constantly undergo.
- <https://www.apa.org/news/podcasts/speaking-of-psychology/fairness>

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# What Does This Mean For Humans?

- “A sense of fairness or a sense of inequity is a partner choice mechanism. If you're working with someone, a partner choice mechanism is cooperation. If you're working with someone and they are constantly taking more than their fair share of the rewards after a cooperative interaction, it's time to go find someone new.” Dr. Sarah Bronson, PhD
- <https://www.apa.org/news/podcasts/speaking-of-psychology/fairness>

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# What Does This Mean For Humans?

- “If I can recognize that the fact that I'm getting more than you is putting our relationship at peril, in peril, then I can do something about that. I can give you some, I can help you out, I can refuse my rewards, I can do something to rectify the inequity.” Dr. Sarah Bronson, PhD
- <https://www.apa.org/news/podcasts/speaking-of-psychology/fairness>

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# What Does This Mean For Humans?

- “By paying a short-term cost to rectify that inequity, I can maintain the long-term benefit of our cooperative relationship. And if I do it right, then we maintain this relationship that has been beneficial in the past and presumably will be so in the future.” Dr. Sarah Bronson, PhD
- <https://www.apa.org/news/podcasts/speaking-of-psychology/fairness>

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# What This Means for Dominance

- “Dominant individuals are more upset by inequity than subordinates because they have more to lose. They're used to getting better outcomes. They probably are less used to being treated unfairly and therefore more likely to respond when they are.” Dr. Sarah Bronson, PhD
- <https://www.apa.org/news/podcasts/speaking-of-psychology/fairness>

**QUESTION #1: HOW DO  
WE FOSTER  
ORGANIZATIONAL  
FAIRNESS AND PROVIDE  
INDIVIDUAL  
ACCOMMODATIONS?**



**QUESTION #2: AS  
EMPLOYERS, WHAT IS  
OUR DUTY OF CARE?**





**QUESTION #3: HOW DO  
WE FULFILL OUR DUTY  
OF CARE?**

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# Employer Duties in Canada

- Part II of the Canada Labour Code.
- “Employers have a general obligation or duty to ensure that the health and safety of every person employed by the employer is protected while they are working.”
- <https://www.canada.ca/en/employment-social-development/services/health-safety/reports/duties.html>

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# Employee Duties in Canada

- Part II of the Canada Labour Code.
- “Employees have a responsibility to take all reasonable and necessary precautions to ensure their health and safety and that of anyone else who may be affected by their work or activities.”
- <https://www.canada.ca/en/employment-social-development/services/health-safety/reports/duties.html>

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# Internal Responsibility System: What We Think It Is

- Part II of the Canada Labour Code.
- “Work place and policy health and safety committees or health and safety representatives.”
- <https://www.canada.ca/en/employment-social-development/services/health-safety/reports/duties.html>

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# Internal Responsibility System: What It Actually Is

- Part II of the Canada Labour Code.
- “The collaborative approach taken by an employer **and** the employees to resolve health and safety concerns in the work place or when performing work activities.”
- <https://www.canada.ca/en/employment-social-development/services/health-safety/reports/duties.html>

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○ One  
Potential  
Answer  
to Duty  
of Care

- “Give us the tools, we’ll finish the job.” – Winston Churchill
- Moving from individual accommodations to a culture of accessibility.

# EQUALITY VS. EQUITY



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# When Equality Isn't Enough

- Need: Shoes.
- Equality: Giving everyone the same pair of shoes. Easier to implement, less effective.
- Equity: Giving people the shoes they need. Harder to implement, more effective.
- Requires: a psychologically safe environment where people feel comfortable naming their needs.
- Workplace example: Transit pass vs. parking vs. WFH.



# WHAT ABOUT ME?



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# When We Can't See Past Our Own Privilege

- “What about me? I didn’t have it easy either! Nothing was handed to me on a silver platter.”
- Requires: the awareness and willingness to examine your areas or privilege.
- Requires: an acknowledgment that there is no finite equity pool: more equity for one person doesn’t reduce the amount of equity available for everyone else.
- Workplace example: Ergonomic chair.

# TRUST IN YOUR STAFF



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# When We Unknowingly Create Cultures of Suspicion

- Do you really need doctor-signed sick notes? What does that say to your staff?
- Do you really need to know the gritty details of why a staff member cannot attend work that day?
- Requires: a frank assessment of organizational culture to determine levels of trust.
- Workplace example: Back to work mandates.

# TRUST AMONGST STAFF



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# When We Unknowingly Create Cultures of Mistrust

- Lack of trust demonstrated by leadership trickles down to all staff.
- Don't be under the illusion that your staff don't speak to each other about their accommodations.
- Requires: a frank assessment of organizational culture to determine levels of trust.
- Workplace example: A staff member's disability is episodic.

**KNOWLEDGE TIP  
#1: HAVE ABLEIST  
CULTURE  
CONVERSATIONS**



**KNOWLEDGE TIP  
#2: ALWAYS BE  
UNLEARNING &  
REFRAMING**





**KNOWLEDGE TIP  
#3: ALWAYS BE  
IDENTIFYING,  
ACKNOWLEDGING,  
AND REFLECTING  
ON PRIVILEGE**



# ACTION TIP #1: COMMUNITIES OF PRACTICE

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# **ACTION TIP #2: CREATE A CULTURE OF ACCESSIBILITY FROM THE GROUND UP**



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**ACTION TIP #3:  
ALWAYS BE REVISING  
POLICIES AS NEEDED**



# KEY RECOMMENDATION FOR CONVERSATIONS ON DISABILITY EQUITY



Accessibility Media Inc (AMI) has a wide range of content for and about people with disabilities

Employable Me follows job seekers with disabilities

Episodes are available online, on TV, and via streaming on their fully accessible app



# In Summary

“It’s not about self-care—it’s about collective care. Collective care means shifting our organizations to be ones where people feel fine if they get sick, cry, have needs, start late because the bus broke down, move slower, ones where there’s food at meetings, people work from home—and these aren’t things we apologize for. It is the way we do the work, which centers disabled-femme-of-color ways of being in the world, where many of us have often worked from our sickbeds, our kid beds, or our too-crazy-to-go-out-today beds. Where we actually care for each other and don’t leave each other behind.”

— Leah Lakshmi Piepzna-Samarasinha, [Care Work: Dreaming Disability Justice](#)

# STAY IN TOUCH



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