

### ***Bitesized Belonging: Being Uncomfortable is Sometimes a Good Thing***

"Get people comfortable being uncomfortable". That was one of the first things my mentor told me when I entered the DEIB field years ago. As she explained, many of the conversations, topics, and systems we seek to better are complex and nuanced. Change--even talking about change--can make people very uncomfortable. Sometimes, the concepts we encounter in DEIB challenge our deeply held convictions, beliefs, and values. They make us weigh what we believe against what we're being told others experience or how they live their lives.

That's not easy.

But it's important we understand our discomfort and not run from it. The act of avoiding discomfort means we often disassociate from real issues or become inflexible. The amazing thing is that discomfort—especially when it comes to self-education about a different community or group of people and their beliefs—can signal opportunities for growth.

Research states that “moderate emotional discomfort is a signal that you’re developing as a person, and it often happens before you can detect the benefits of self-growth” ([BehavioralScientist.org](https://behavioralscientist.org/)). So, whether it’s being confronted with an idea that you don’t agree with, or having a fellow employee call you out for non-inclusive language, or the always discomforting moment someone corrects your use of their pronouns, remember that “when people can positively spin otherwise negative cues—reappraise their discomfort as a sign of achievement—those cues become more motivating” ([BehavioralScientist.org](https://behavioralscientist.org/)).

#### **4 Ways to Practice Positive Discomfort ([Forbes.com](https://www.forbes.com/))**

**1. Develop a Growth Mindset:** See challenges and obstacles as a necessary part of your own growth. View difficult conversations as opportunities to continue growing, rather than snares to entrap you.

**2. Learn From Your Mistakes:** To learn from your mistakes start by acknowledging to yourself that something actually *was* a mistake. Give yourself grace, there’s no need to mentally chastise yourself, and set some goals to ensure it doesn’t happen again.

**3. Define Your Purpose:** Having an overall sense of purpose encourages one to explore tough topics when we encounter challenges. Defining your purpose, or the purpose for work that might be encountering discomfort, can help create a connection between yourself and others. Ex: As a People Leader your purpose might be leading well and inclusively. As an employee your purpose might be demonstrating Cengage Group’s Ethos in your conversations and the work we do.

**4. Remain Flexible:** Adaptation is a crucial skill when it comes to discomfort. Flexible

people often use past mistakes and current discomfort as learning opportunities and actively seek lessons they can use later. This type of growth means flexible people tend to lean into discomfort faster than more rigid folks.

More Practice: **Can discomfort really be a vehicle for self-growth? How can we create spaces in which people feel comfortable being uncomfortable? What are some additional ways you can embrace discomfort as a sign of growth?**

Resources:

6-7 min. read: [Very Well Mind: How to Get Comfortable Being Uncomfortable](#)

2-3 min. read: [DEIB Can Be Uncomfortable](#)

12 min. video: [The Uncomfortable Conversations We Need to Have at Work](#)