

10 ways to achieve belonging



Belonging is the sense of safety and comfort you feel when you are accepted for who you are. It's more than inclusion, it's an authentic acceptance and a state of feeling both connected and supported.

There are a range of ways that we can all work to achieve and grow belonging, both for ourselves and for those in our communities. The following are some steps that we can all take as we work to create belonging:

- 01 Listen**
Hearing someone is one of the most powerful ways we can show them that they belong. This doesn't always mean agreeing with them, it means acknowledging what they have said and how they feel.
- 02 Give**
Giving connects two people, the giver and the receiver, and this connection creates a new sense of belonging.
- 03 Nurture self-acceptance**
Our sense of belonging is strengthened when we can accept ourselves as we are. Seek out spaces and relationships where you feel safe to show more of your authentic self, knowing that belonging is possible even when circumstances limit how much we can share.
- 04 Make an effort**
Creating a sense of belonging takes effort. It requires you to put yourself out there. Seek out activities and groups of people with whom you have common interests and respectfully engage with others who you may be different to.
- 05 Be patient**
It might take time to gain acceptance, attention, and support from members of the group. Practice small steps, often, and over time these will pay off.

06 Reach out
to people you don't know. You may find you have more in common than you think.

07 Practice acceptance
Focus on the similarities, not the differences. Remain open to new ways of thinking.

08 Be empathetic
Listen, hold space, withhold judgment, connect emotionally. These all communicate the message "you're not alone".

09 'Call in' rather than 'call out'
Calling out' publicly challenges someone for their views. People can feel criticised, creating a sense of shame and deflection. 'Calling in' invites a deeper discussion and creates a compassionate space for listening and understanding. Calling in helps people recognise their assumptions and offers new information and perspectives.

10 Learn about the experiences of our First Nations
Recognising Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders' continuous custodianship of these Countries is the first step to supporting your own sense of belonging.

Some helpful resources if you would like to read more:

Brené Brown (2017) 'Braving the Wilderness, The quest for true belonging and the courage to stand alone', Vermilion

Deepak Chopra MD, FACP, founder of The Chopra Foundation, a non-profit entity for research on well-being and humanitarianism.

Very Well Mind – What is the sense of belonging?

Harvard University – Calling in and calling out guide

Common Ground is a First Nations-led not-for-profit working to shape a society that centres First Nations people by amplifying knowledge, cultures and stories.

Share our pride is designed to take you on an awareness-raising journey. You'll get a taste of traditional cultures and learn about our shared history.