



My Whole Self

My Whole Self: Panel discussion

We all deserve to feel valued and empowered to be our whole self at work. When people feel psychologically safe, teams can unlock innovation and excellence.

Brought to you by Mental Health First Aid England®, My Whole Self is the campaign for workplace culture change. We want organisations to empower employees to bring their whole self to work. That includes background, sexuality, religion, gender, health, and mental health.

By bringing together diversity and inclusion with health and wellbeing, we can drive positive transformation in workplace mental health and performance. At MHFA England®, we believe wellbeing and productivity fuel one another. We know teams that feel safe and connected work better together.

Employees at all levels should feel able to be open about their own needs at work. As the way we work continues to evolve, supporting human connection is more important than ever. Understanding people's experiences and how that impacts their wellbeing and frame of reference is vital in creating supportive workplaces.

The activity below invites senior leaders to share more about themselves and their experiences in a discussion. This can help employees at all levels feel open about their own needs and foster a more supportive, inclusive workplace.

Cultures where people show up proudly as their whole selves are within reach when we lead with empathy. Are you ready?



Suitable for: Groups



Time: 30 - 60 minutes



Materials: Meeting space or online meeting platform

Activity

- 1. Identify a theme or a question that the My Whole Self panel discussion will be based on.** When deciding, you may want to consider what key points you would like your panel discussion to cover.

Here are some examples of themes you could choose:

- 'What does it mean to bring your whole self to work?'
- 'Why does equity, diversity and inclusion matter to you?'

- 2. Choose the size of your panel.** An ideal panel size consists of a maximum of three participants. Remember that larger groups of panellists make it difficult for every person to voice their experiences and thoughts without going over the time limit.
- 3. Decide which of your senior leaders will be speaking on the My Whole Self panel.** For a rich discussion, include individuals who represent diverse backgrounds (including race, sexuality, and ability) and can offer different opinions about the theme.
- 4. Choose a moderator for the panel.** This person should have a good understanding of the theme and should be able to guide the conversation. It is not the best idea to have a panellist take on the moderator role.

Make sure the moderator understands that their role is:

- To introduce the panellists
- To ask the panellists questions
- To create a smooth transition between questions
- To moderate any potential disagreements among panellists

- To ensure that all panellists are heard from
- To manage the timings and make sure that the length of the discussion doesn't exceed the time limit

5. If using an online platform to host the panel discussion circulate the link to all panellists and attendees ahead of the discussion. It is a good idea to host a practice session with panellists to make sure everyone is confident, understands their role and there are no technological glitches.

We recommend ensuring that an MHFAider® or member of your HR team is available for the event to offer support to any of the panellists or attendees if necessary. If you do not have an MHFAider or HR team at your organisation, agree where you will signpost panellists or attendees if they need support. We advise circulating these details to panellists and attendees before the event takes place.

6. Agree several questions that you want to ask your panellists. You'll have the moderator ask these questions to get the discussion started. Be sure to ask open- ended questions, such as 'who', 'what', 'when', 'where', 'why', and 'how', rather than questions that simply require a 'yes' or 'no' answer.

Here are some ideas to get you started:

- How would you describe work you, and home you? Are they different?
- Have you ever felt like you had to leave something at the door while at work?
- Did hiding your whole self have an impact on your mental health or your ability to do your best at work?
- At what stage did you feel empowered to bring your whole self to work?
- How did this benefit you in your role?
- What can we do to help people feel like they are bringing their whole self to work?
- Why is a diverse and inclusive workplace important for you and for business?

Allow time at the end of the discussion for the panellists to take questions from the audience. You may want to give your audience the opportunity to ask questions anonymously. MHFA England often use the online tool Slido to host Q&A sessions.