

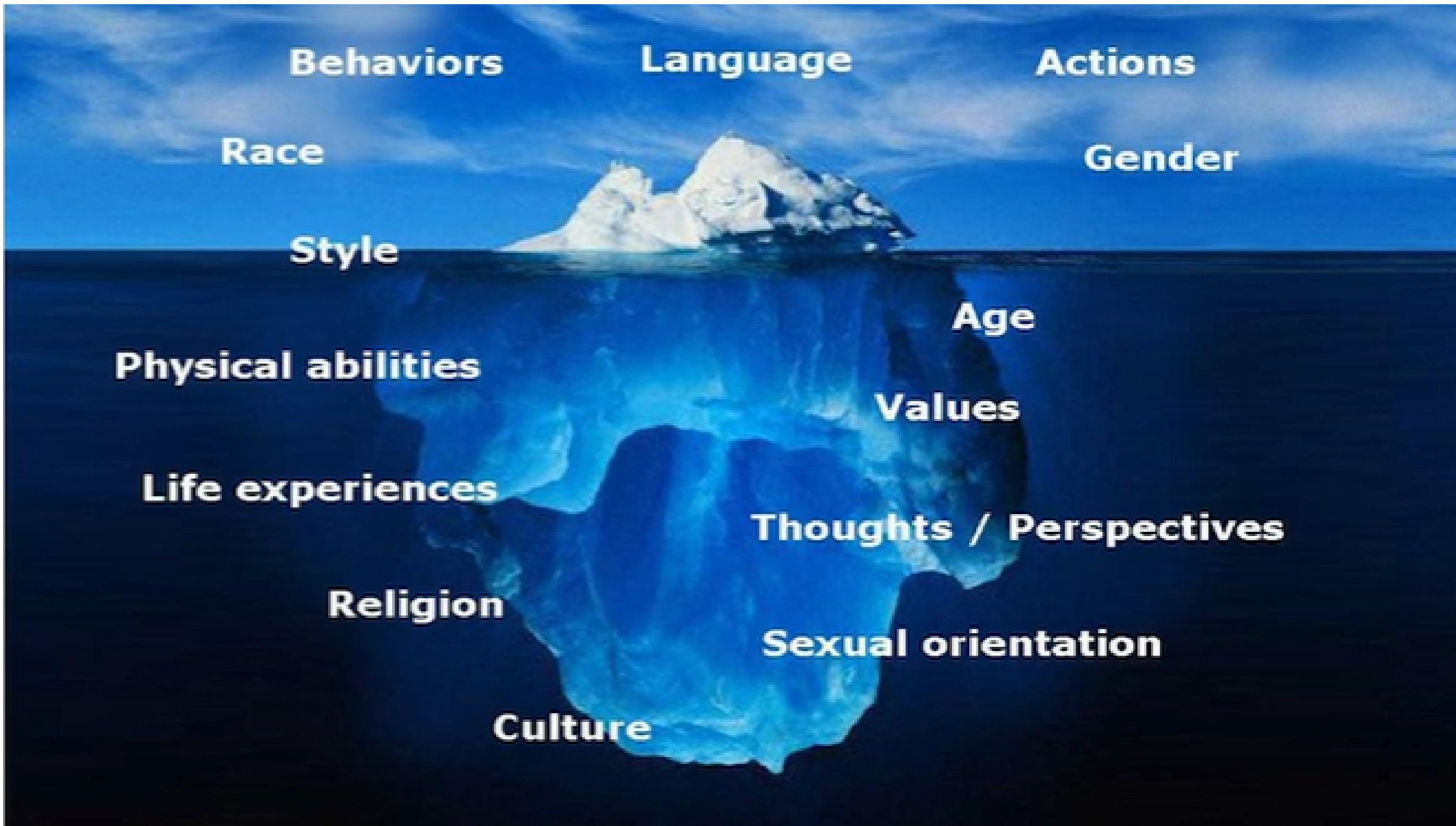
# Understanding Identity

Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion

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Only a small portion of an iceberg can be seen above the waterline. Similarly, understanding someone's identity is limited by what we see on the surface. This mini lesson explores the concept of identity and the importance of going "below the waterline" to challenge and avoid stereotypes and identity-based bias.



# Module Objectives

Define identity and its various components.

Explore the importance of understanding and acknowledging one's identity.

Examine how identity contributes to a sense of inclusion and belonging.

Recognize the role of identity in shaping individual perspectives and interactions within diverse communities



## MODULE ONE: DEFINE IDENTITY

# What is Identity?

Identity is defined as “a person’s sense of self, established by their unique characteristics, affiliations, and social roles.”

One’s identity develops throughout their lifetime as they have various experiences and influences from childhood onward.

Identity is complex, as it includes a continued sense of self along with shifts and adaptations along the process of identity formation.



## MODULE ONE: DEFINE IDENTITY

# Aspects of Identity

RACE

SEXUALITY

GENDER

RELIGION

NATIONALITY

CULTURE

ETHNICITY

ABILITY

One's unchangeable characteristics, such as the above aspects of identity, play a large role in identity formation because of how they inform social interactions throughout one's life. A certain degree of inheritance from one's family or community is also evident for these aspects of identity.

Social interactions, influences, and other experiences, especially during adolescence, are very formative for essential aspects of personal identity as well, such as morals, values, and beliefs. While these aspects can change, more than the above aspects, the formation of a solid identity as one ages decreases the likelihood that they change personal identity traits.

## MODULE TWO: UNDERSTAND IMPORTANCE OF IDENTITY

# Why Identity Matters

**Failing to Acknowledge Identity Can Have Harmful Impacts**

Because identity is closely tied to one's sense of self, failing to acknowledge identities, whether visible or invisible, may cause psychological or emotional harm.

**Microaggressions and Harassment Can Limit Inclusion**

Microaggressions--small but hostile interactions that invalidate, other, and communicate fear of marginalized individuals--can be unintentional while causing victims great stress. Harassment--derogatory or violent communication or behaviors--may be covert but always causes exclusion.

**Discrimination is Counteracts Attempts at Equity**

Unfair and differential treatment can take many forms, from hiring to development opportunities to disciplinary action. In all situations, discrimination makes equity impossible.

## MODULE THREE: IDENTITY, INCLUSION, AND BELONGING

# An Inclusive Approach



Inclusion is about more than just stopping harmful behaviors, although this is an important step and a constant process for developing an inclusive environment. An inclusive approach requires critical thinking, introspection, reflection, and active learning to maintain awareness and treat all identities equitably.

EQUAL ACCESS

DIVERSE VOICES

ACCEPTANCE

FAIR TREATMENT

SAFE SPACES

## MODULE THREE: IDENTITY, INCLUSION, AND BELONGING

# Inclusion and Diversity

Diversity is essential to any inclusive environment, and vice versa, but the meaning of each and the relationship between the two can be difficult to understand

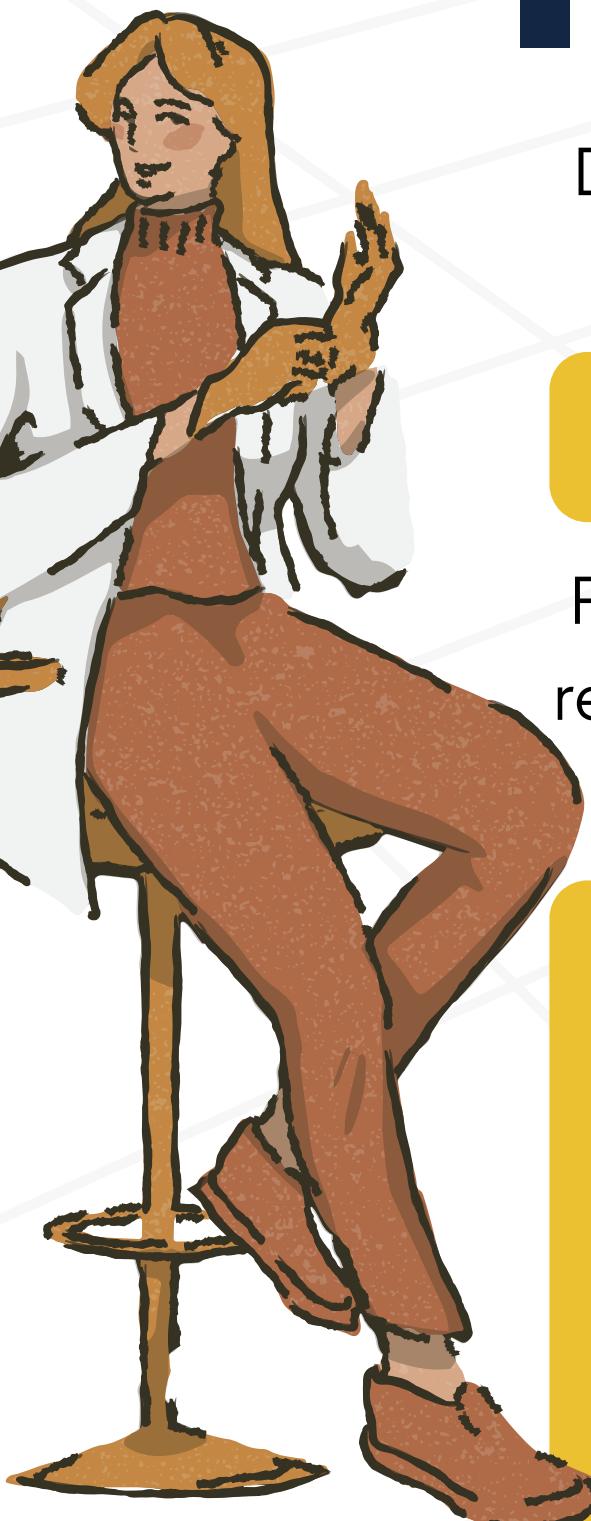
### Inclusion

Fostering a welcoming space that actively respects and values the different identities that make each person an individual.

### Diversity

Having a variety of identities and marginalized groups represented and interacting meaningfully with each other.

Inclusion and diversity rely on each other. Diversity provides the space for inclusion to occur, and inclusion creates an environment for diversity to thrive. While diversity comes about over time as a series of individual actions, inclusion is a pattern of behavior and a culture that is developed and deliberately maintained. Simply seeking to increase one of these qualities in a given space will inevitable harm all members of that space, especially the most marginalized, as personhood and identity are undermined.





## MODULE THREE: IDENTITY, INCLUSION, AND BELONGING

# Inclusion is Strength

Inclusive environments benefit from having a variety of perspectives to build upon and learn from. There is much to be learned from each person's lived experience, and diversity can help teams be more flexible and responsive in times of crisis.

Everyone feels welcome and safe in an inclusive environment. Whether you are a part of a marginalized community or not, inclusion helps us grow and improve ourselves, allows everyone to feel and be seen, and encourages caring, humble leadership to thrive.

## MODULE FOUR: APPLYING IDENTITY AND INCLUSION

# Identity and Interpersonal Dynamics

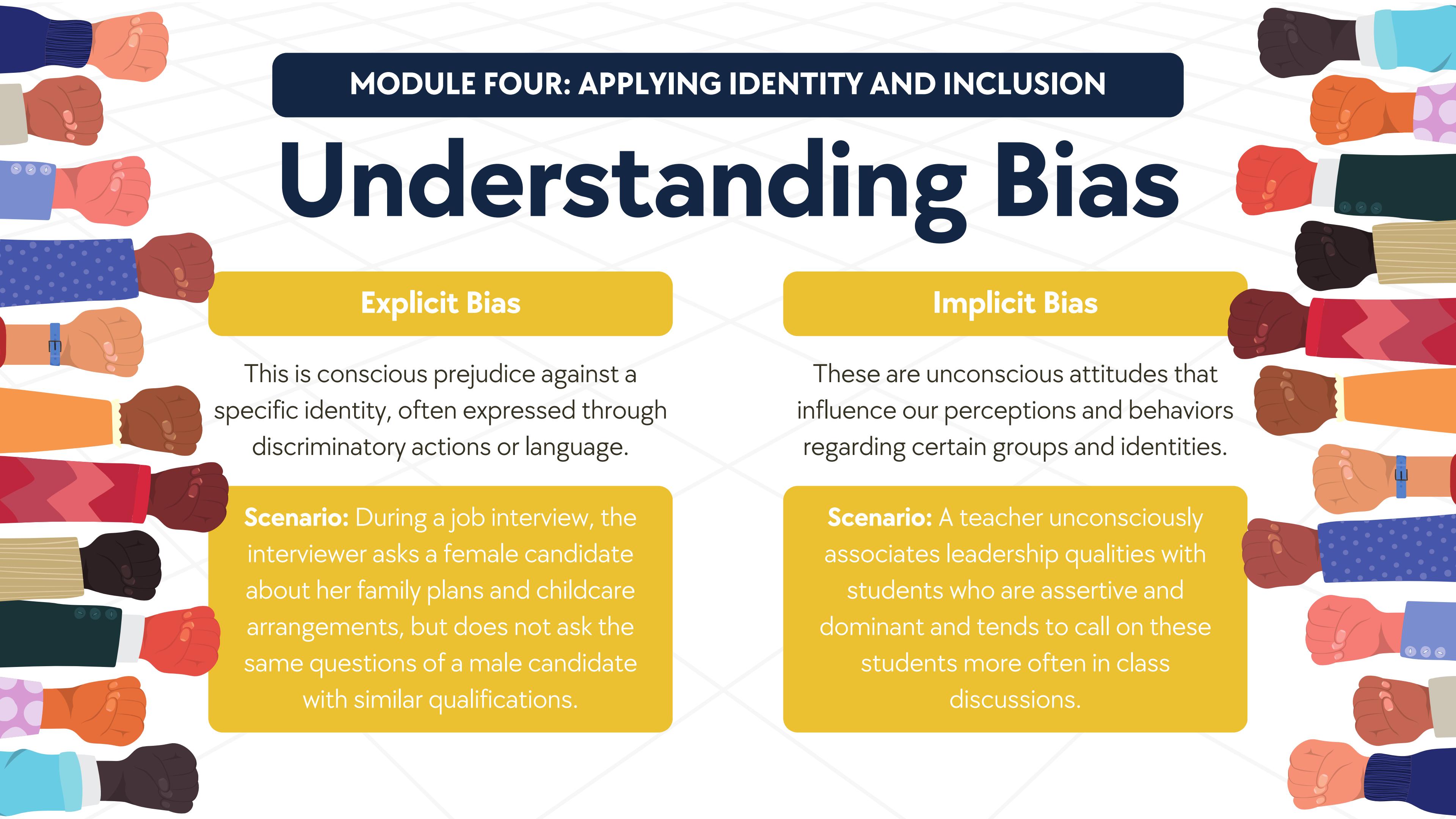
Now that we understand identity, why it matters, and why inclusion is essential to properly acknowledging identity, we need to take the final step and learn to apply these concepts. First let us discuss the challenges to inclusion that everyone faces everyday.

### Bias

Prejudice toward or against certain groups or identities that is learned through socialization.

### Stereotypes

A wide generalization of a trait that is associated with a particular group or identity.



## MODULE FOUR: APPLYING IDENTITY AND INCLUSION

# Understanding Bias

### Explicit Bias

This is conscious prejudice against a specific identity, often expressed through discriminatory actions or language.

**Scenario:** During a job interview, the interviewer asks a female candidate about her family plans and childcare arrangements, but does not ask the same questions of a male candidate with similar qualifications.

### Implicit Bias

These are unconscious attitudes that influence our perceptions and behaviors regarding certain groups and identities.

**Scenario:** A teacher unconsciously associates leadership qualities with students who are assertive and dominant and tends to call on these students more often in class discussions.



## MODULE FOUR: APPLYING IDENTITY AND INCLUSION

# The Impact of Bias & Stereotypes

Everyone has biases, and the nature of stereotypes can make it difficult to realize when we are committing microaggressions or acting in exclusive ways. Once we understand the impact that bias and stereotypes can have, we are more motivated to remain aware and unlearn such attitudes to be more inclusive.

Bias can lead to unfair treatment, both intentional and unintentional, causing different outcomes for people of different identities. Differing outcomes may be wages in the workplace, disciplinary action in school, or feelings of exclusion on a team. Stereotypes have a similar effect, emphasizing the lack of awareness by the perpetrator and minimizing the lived experience of the victim. Because bias and stereotypes tend to act subconsciously, we must intentionally unlearn and correct these attitudes ourselves to prevent causing or permitting harm in diverse settings.

## MODULE FOUR: APPLYING IDENTITY AND INCLUSION

# Effective Communication

Now that we understand the challenges to inclusion, we can learn about the key to creating an inclusive environment: Effective Communication Practices. Identity can only be recognized through meaningful interactions with others, and showing someone respect for their unique individuality can be as simple as being open, honest, and aware when in conversation.

INTENTIONAL DISCUSSION

ACKNOWLEDGE  
DIFFERENCES IN PROGRESS

SET & RESPECT BOUNDARIES

TAKE ACCOUNTABILITY

RESPECT EXPERIENCES

COMMIT TO THE PROCESS

## MODULE FOUR: APPLYING IDENTITY AND INCLUSION

# Effective Communication in Action

### INTENTIONAL DISCUSSION

Identity and inclusion impact everything we do, but until recently, many of us were unaware of this reality due to privilege and a lack of diverse education. To learn from the experiences of others and share this knowledge with those who may be ignorant, one must intentionally open up an honest, judgement-free conversation with those around them.

### ACKNOWLEDGE DIFFERENCES IN PROGRESS

Everyone is operating with different knowledge, so patience will be crucial to having an effective conversation about inclusion and to embed inclusion in your everyday interactions. Maintain mindfulness of this reality and help remind others to minimize tension in day to day interactions.



## MODULE FOUR: APPLYING IDENTITY AND INCLUSION

# Effective Communication in Action

### SET & RESPECT BOUNDARIES

Although we are trying to be as open as possible, everyone deserves the freedom to set their own boundaries and have them respected by others. Make sure that individuals are given this opportunity in discussion, and set clear guidelines for acceptable and inclusive conduct if applicable to your space.

### TAKE ACCOUNTABILITY

Mistakes are human and expected to occur when we are learning. The important part is to be accountable for your mistakes and do your best to make amends if necessary. Be sure to hold others accountable and avoid closing yourself off if others call you out.



## MODULE FOUR: APPLYING IDENTITY AND INCLUSION

# Effective Communication in Action

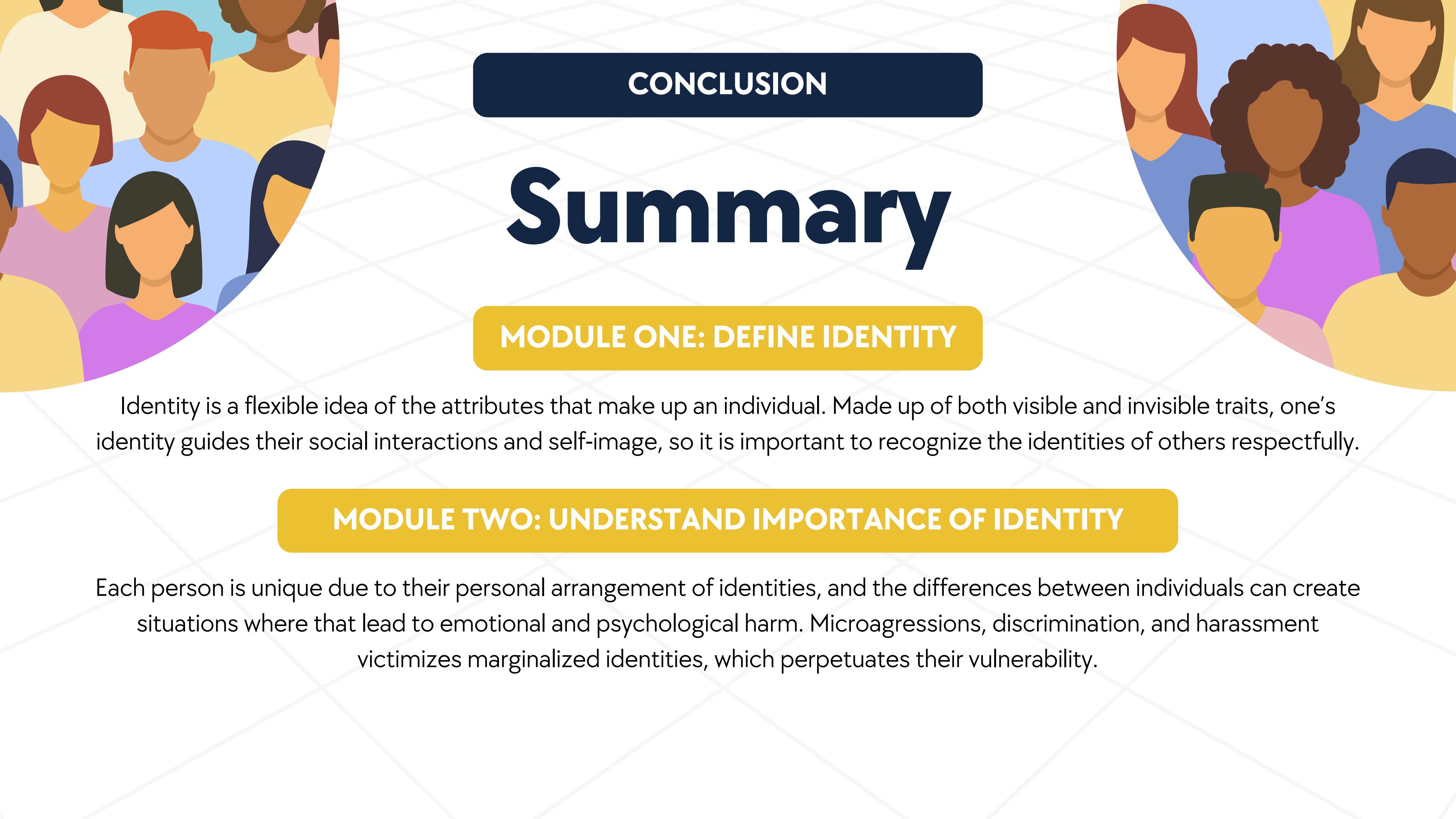
### RESPECT EXPERIENCES

Showing respect for others, especially when you are learning, is the best way to make people feel welcome and included. Avoid dismissing the experiences of others in conversation and in passing, instead, be kind, pay attention, and empathize with those around you to fully absorb the depth and wisdom of your peers.

### COMMIT TO THE PROCESS

Inclusion is a journey that requires effort and intention 24/7. If your aim is to be inclusive, take these steps seriously and do not be discouraged by missteps or challenges. Committing to the process will be rewarding for you and those around you in the long run as you contribute to building an inclusive environment .





## CONCLUSION

# Summary

### MODULE ONE: DEFINE IDENTITY

Identity is a flexible idea of the attributes that make up an individual. Made up of both visible and invisible traits, one's identity guides their social interactions and self-image, so it is important to recognize the identities of others respectfully.

### MODULE TWO: UNDERSTAND IMPORTANCE OF IDENTITY

Each person is unique due to their personal arrangement of identities, and the differences between individuals can create situations where that lead to emotional and psychological harm. Microaggressions, discrimination, and harassment victimizes marginalized identities, which perpetuates their vulnerability.



## CONCLUSION

# Summary

### MODULE THREE: IDENTITY, INCLUSION, AND BELONGING

When identity and diversity compliment each other, communities are made stronger and individuals improve in a variety of ways. By taking an inclusive approach, we increase equity and welcome individuals of various identities to grow together.

### MODULE FOUR: APPLYING IDENTITY AND INCLUSION

Applying what we have learned about identity and inclusion can be challenging because bias—both implicit and explicit—and stereotypes can hinder understanding and cause intentional and unintentional differential treatment. However we can overcome these challenges by following the steps to Effective Communication every day.

## CONCLUSION

# What Now?

### YOUR TURN!

Now it is time to take what you have learned about identity to increase inclusion in the world around you. Respect others, keep learning, and commit to these principles everyday. Start now by acknowledging your starting point and being patient with others, as everyone has more to learn when it comes to inclusion.



# Reflection Activity

**WRITE:** What makes you who you are? What makes you unique and different? Write down as many terms as possible to define yourself.

**THINK:** What aspects of your diversity flow in the plain sight for all to see? What do you keep concealed beneath your water line? Where do you set your water line to feel safe?



# Iceberg Activity



**VISIBLE**

**SOMETIMES VISIBLE**

**INVISIBLE**

**CREATE your own iceberg:** Place your identities on the iceberg based on their visibility or invisibility.

- Visible identities go above the waterline (ex: skin color)
- Identities that are visible only under certain circumstances go on the water line (ex: religion)
- Invisible identities go below the water line (ex: sexual orientation)

# Want to Learn More?

Identity: Definition, Types, & Examples | <https://www.berkeleywellbeing.com/identity.html>

How to Be Inclusive | <https://indivisible.org/resource-library/how-be-inclusive-introduction>



Belonging, A Critical Piece of Diversity, Equity & Inclusion | Carin Taylor |  
TEDxSonomaCounty

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Eliminating Microaggressions: The Next Level of Inclusion | Tiffany Alvoid | TEDxOakland  
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