**Empowering our team**

**Reducing or removing stereotype threat in a diverse work environment**

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### What are stereotypes and stereotype threat?

**Stereotypes**

A stereotype is defined as “a belief about a group of individuals.” They can be positive or negative, true or false.

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**Stereotype threat**

Stereotype threat is the fear of confirming in oneself a negative stereotype due to performance on difficult or self-evaluative tasks.

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**Contributing factors**

- How important is the stereotype to the person?
- How much does the person identify with the group stereotyped group?
- How much do they want to succeed at the task?
- Higher intelligence, higher stress, and cognitive load.
- Has the stereotype been activated?
- How much focus is there on evaluative aspects?
- How media portrays it.
- Social environment.
- Multiple social groups.

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### How does it effect employees?

Employees who are affected by stereotype threat often don’t even know it is happening. The more negative stereotypes a person may be susceptible to, the worse it can be.

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#### Effects

- Stress related to the pressure to not confirm negative stereotypes
- Performance changes
- Preoccupation and distraction
- Disengagement
- Disidentification
- Decreased motivation
- Over-effortning
- Working memory taxation
- Lower performance on difficult tasks
- Change in career or goals
- Inflexible perseverance
- Anxiety
- Self-fulfilling prophecy

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### What can you do to reduce or remove it?

- Talk about stereotype threat openly with employees.
- Tell employees they are not being judged when they are doing difficult tasks and affirm their abilities.
- Use constructive criticism, set high standards, but assure them you know they can do it.
- Talk about projects and challenges together. Help them see they have more in common than different.

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- Create an identity-safe environment.
- Surround employees with positive role models and affirming statements.

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- Do self-affirmation tasks and mindfulness training.
- Networking, mentoring, and professional development.
- Empower your employees.
- Create critical mass in projects.

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- Train hiring committees in stereotype threat.
- Refrain from making comments during interviews that would make people cognizant of their social group.
- Make job postings social group neutral.