Lecture Four: Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) in Communication

The role and responsibility of DEI communication strategy is two-fold:

- To give each individual and diverse group a voice and sense of belonging.

- To inform, educate, and support all interlocutors to adopt inclusive attitudes in every aspect of their working lives.

1-Diversity in communication

Diversity, in general, is the state of having people of different characteristics in a group or organization. These characteristics or dimensions of diversity include. among others:
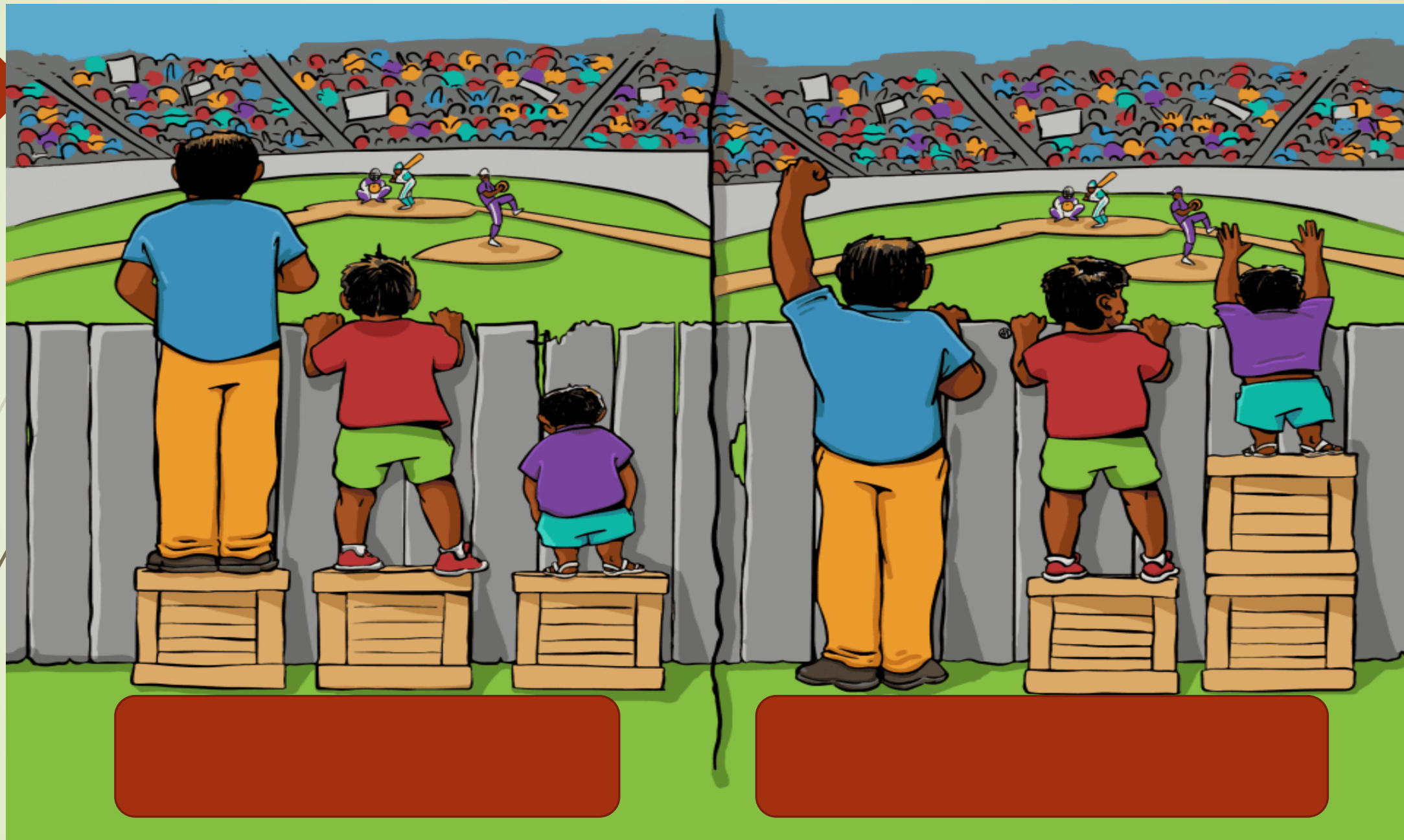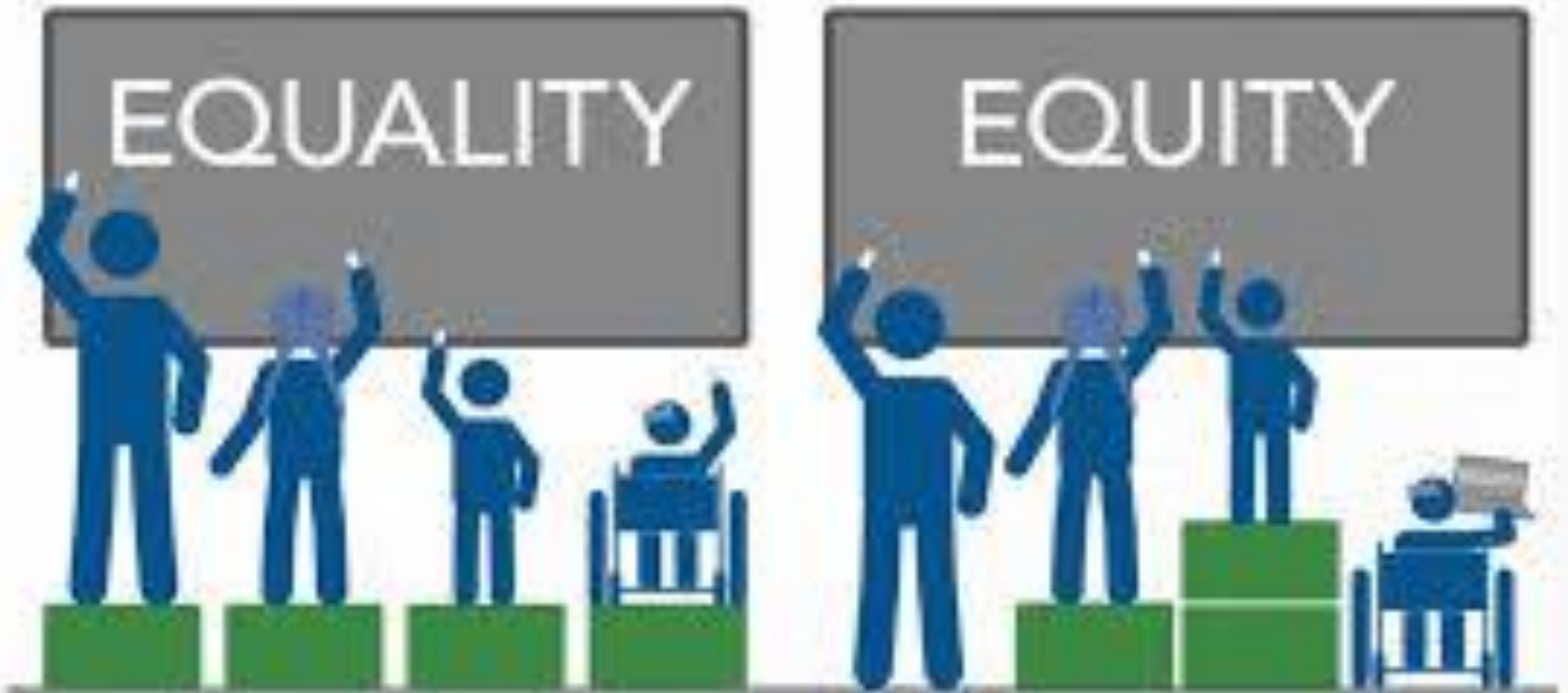
❑ *Equity* should not be confused with *equality*.

❑ **Equality** is giving each member of the group the same resources, regardless of their actual needs or opportunities. **Equity**, on the other hand, recognizes that each member of the group has *different circumstances and needs*, and that they, therefore, need *different resources and opportunities* in order to thrive.

❑ In sum, equity means that every person should be given **an equal chance** (not the same resources) to succeed.

Communication should be equity-based, meaning that all the interlocutors should be given equal opportunities to participate in conversations, regardless of their dimensions of diversity.
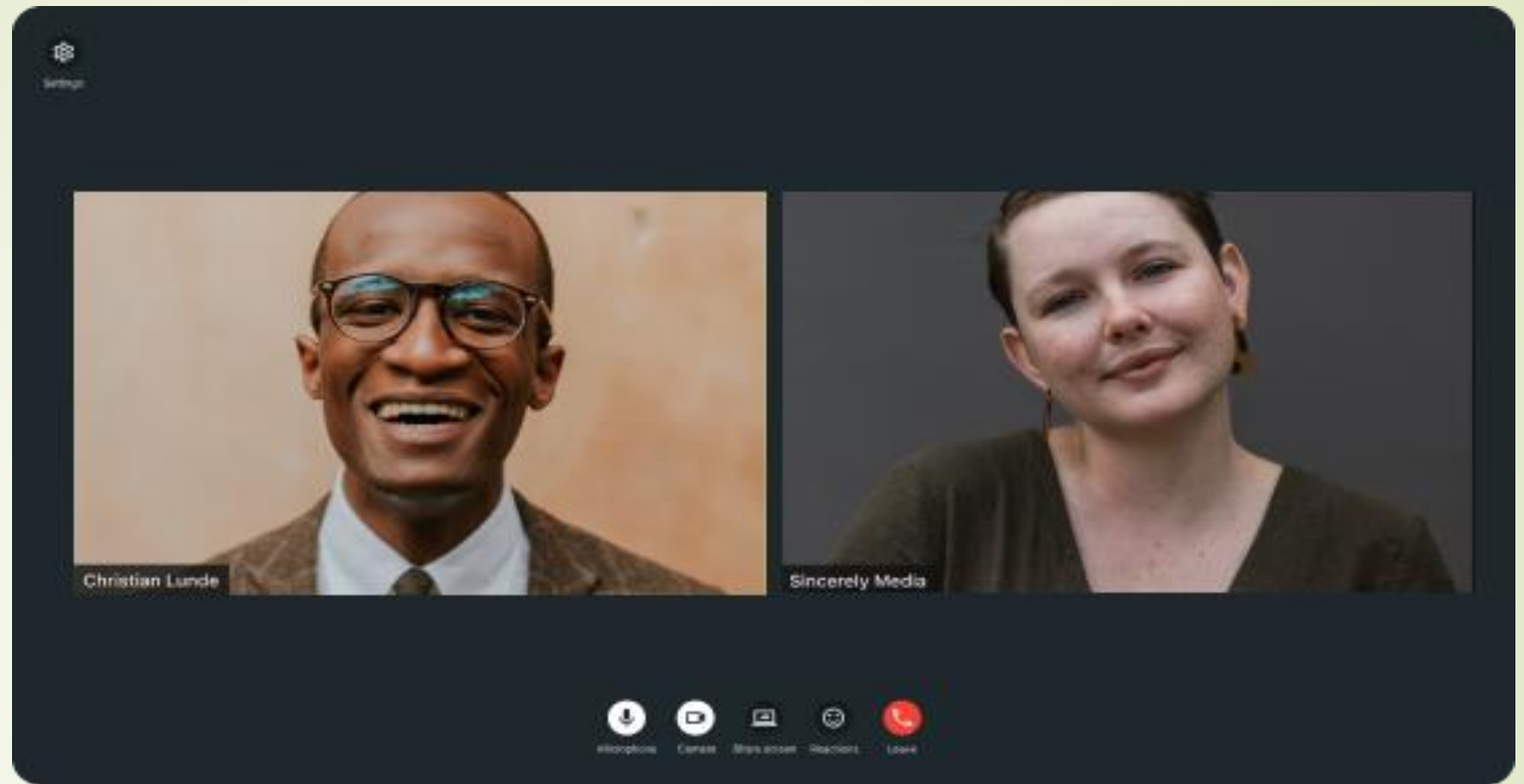
If your coworker is hard of hearing, you should not schedule an audio call with him/her. Instead, opt for a 1-on-1 meeting or a video call, but only after asking your coworker for his/her preferences.

3- Inclusion in communication

*Inclusive communication, in its purest sense, appropriately addresses **as many people as possible** in the interaction. It invites all people to feel seen, heard, valued, and respected. Inclusive communication is not just the words we use, but also how we communicate in our body language and actions. It also requires cultural humility — a lifelong commitment to learning about diverse communities, power dynamics and imbalances, and self-evaluating our cultural gaps.''* <u>Sacha Thompson</u>

- Inclusive communication does not exclude or discriminate against anyone, either intentionally or unintentionally.
- By making your communication as inclusive as possible, you will help to ensure that the information that you are sharing is accessible for all.

4- How to promote inclusive communication

A- Awareness

The first step to promoting inclusion through communication is to be aware of where there might be barriers in the first place.

B-Consider Your Audience

We all adapt our communication style and methods depending on who we are communicating with, and our relationship to them. Think of a simple greeting. The words, tone and any accompanying gesture you use will differ wildly when greeting your boss, a new client, your sibling or your best friend.

C- Inclusive Language

❑ Inclusive language is integral to communication. When you communicate, you want to ensure that your language conveys respect and creates a safe environment for your audience.

❑ Inclusive language means words, phrases or tones that do not contain discriminatory, stereotyped or prejudiced ideas of groups of people.

❑ It is also **language** that does not deliberately or inadvertently exclude people from being seen as part of a group.

Inclusive Language

Avoid gendered language

When greeting others

Avoid:

ladies **gentlemen** **ma'am** **sir** **girls** **guys** etc.

Consider using instead:

"Thanks, **friends**. Have a great night."

"Good morning, **folks**!"

"Hi, **everyone**!"

"And for **you**?"

"Can I get you **all** something?"

Why?

Shifting to gender-inclusive language respects and acknowledges the gender identities of all people and removes assumption.

Be mindful of language

Based on Toni Latour's "Hello there" cards.

Learn more at **qmunity.ca**

Inclusive LANGUAGE

Avoid	Instead
"wife" "husband" "boyfriend" "girlfriend"	"spouse" "significant other" "partner"
"mom" "dad"	"parents" "guardians" "caregivers"
"son" "daughter"	"children"
"ladies" "gentleman" "guys" "gals"	"everyone" "people" "colleagues" "team"
"sexual preferences"	"sexual orientation" "sexuality"
"maternity leave" "paternity leave"	"parental leave"
"Mr." "Mrs." "Miss" "Ms."	"Alex" "Sharon" "James" "Blake" *Simply use their preferred name.*
"she" "he"	"they" "them"
"homosexual"	"gay" "lesbian"
"mailman" "policeman" "chairman"	"mail clerk" "police officer" "chairperson"

YOU BELONG

UnityPoint Health

4-1 Guidelines on using inclusive language

Inclusive language is integral to communication. The following are some guidelines that govern inclusive communication.

4.1.1 People First: When you are describing a person who belongs to a group with a disability or an illness, use people first language to avoid subconscious bias.

- *Example 1: Jane is a disabled person.*
- *Example 2: Jane has a disability.*

4.1.2 Words Matter: Choose the words that you use carefully to make sure you are not excluding people.

- *Example 3: The wives of executives are also invited to attend the annual gala.*
- *Example 4: The partners of executives are also invited to attend the annual gala.*

4.1.3 Language Changes: The values in society are constantly changing, so language also has to adapt to those changes.

- *Example 5:* *Jim from Accounting constantly makes mistakes in his reports. How did he get this job? He is so retarded.*
- *Example 6:* *Jim from Accounting constantly makes mistakes in his reports. He doesn't have the skills to effectively prepare reports.*

4.1.4 Inclusive Terms: Constantly review the words and phrases you use to make sure they are inclusive of all your audience.

•*Example 7:* *Hello, ladies and gentlemen. Welcome to our conference today.*

•*Example 8:* *Hello, everyone. Welcome to our conference today.*

4.1.5 Generalizations & Stereotypes: When communicating with your audience, be careful about making assumptions based on age, gender, culture and so on.

- **Example 9:** *As we all know, it is difficult for old people to adapt to new technology, so we should require old people to come into the office.*

- **Example 10:** *In our company survey, 30% of respondents indicated that they were not comfortable with the new work-from-home technology. I think we should provide further training or give them the option to work from the office.*

4.1.6 Insensitive Language: Certain words or phrases may be offensive to your audience. As a communicator, it is your duty to educate yourself about those terms to make sure you do not cause offense.

Example 11: Let's have a powwow to discuss the new contract we received from

Sunny Roofing.

Example 12: Let's have a meeting to discuss the new contract we received from

Sunny Roofing.

5- Neurodiversity and Communication

❑ It is estimated that around **1 in 7 people** are neurodivergent. This means that their brains process and interpret information differently to the majority of the population.

❑ Each autistic person, for example, will have different communication differences and experience different strengths and challenges. This means that any adjustments to communication should be **based on that individual's particular needs**.

How do you make your communications more inclusive for neurodivergent interactants?

- Be clear and concise in what you communicate; break instructions into chunks.

- Avoid metaphor, sarcasm or idiom – such as *'let's smash this'* or *'you're a star'*. Some neurodivergent individuals interpret language very literally.

- Adjust your expectations regarding the meaning behind some non-verbal communication – don't be offended if a handshake is not offered, or eye contact is inconsistent.

- Do not ask 'open' questions – for some neurodivergent people, these bring too much uncertainty and they respond better to questions with concrete answers.

- Use visuals to reinforce spoken communication.

❑ The concept of **DEI** in communication revolves around recognizing and valuing differences and creating an inclusive environment that encourages and supports all communicators regardless of their race, ethnicity, gender, religion, language, etc.

❑ If diversity is the *"what"*, equity and inclusion are the *"how"*.

❑ The role of EDI communication is two-fold: To give each individual and diverse group a voice and sense of belonging.