


Chapter 7

Training in Diversity, Inclusion, and Equitable Mindfulness

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ABSTRACT

This chapter explores how two Black women working as diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) independent consultants teamed up to create the Training in Diversity, Inclusion, and Equitable Mindfulness (TDIEM) workshop series. TDIEM workshops are interactive educational sessions that teach DEI concepts through the lens of Equitable Mindfulness. Equitable Mindfulness utilizes the application of mindfulness (present moment experience) for everyone—removing personal and systematic barriers that work against inclusivity and transformative change within themselves and within the communities they work within (Cash et al., 2021). Here the authors discuss Black women’s positions as DEI workers as well as the history of mindfulness, outline the TDIEM workshop series, present challenges to collaborating and facilitating this curriculum in White spaces, and offer recommendations for practice for other Black women DEI practitioners to use for future work in White spaces.

INTRODUCTION

Our current contemporary ideas about diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) work have long been heralded by the prior efforts and labor of Black women or people of color (Edgehill, 2007). These efforts and labor range from Ida B. Wells-Barnett, (a journalist in the late nineteenth to the early twentieth centuries who led a national anti-lynching crusade and founded a Black women’s suffrage organization in Chicago, Illinois), to Tamika Mallory, (a twenty-first century civil rights activist who was one of the

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leading voices in the nation-wide protest of the murder of George Floyd, the co-founder of the 2017 Women's March, and co-founder of the non-profit organization Until Freedom). The fight for diversity and inclusion is far from over.

This work - while extremely rewarding - can also be equally taxing. While shedding light on experiences, concepts, and theories surrounding the current and historical underpinnings of oppression within the western world, the pressuring weight of educating and expression usually falls on the diversity and inclusion facilitators, especially if they are Black women. Importantly, the work itself is also taxing on the participants. Holding space - inviting an individual into one's own mindfulness practice by seeing, hearing, and holding what they need to express, and using mindful listening and heartfelt compassion without giving advice or attempting to solve problems (Cash et al., 2021, pg. 13) - for critically examining long-standing concepts of colonialism, colorism, and capitalism can feel burdensome. Imagine then if there were a tool to support both DEI facilitators and participants while investigating these hot-button concepts.

The Training in Diversity, Inclusion, & Equitable Mindfulness Series (TDIEM) workshops are interactive diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) educational sessions that teach DEI concepts while grounding in the framework of Equitable Mindfulness (EM) (Cash et al., 2021). Conceptualizing DEI topics, especially difficult ones, can be enhanced with the practice of Equitable Mindfulness, as this framework presents the concept of mindfulness (present moment experience) to *everyone*, while being active to remove personal and systematic barriers that work against inclusivity and transformative change within a respective community. TDIEM is a collaborative effort between Dr. Tristen Johnson and Tiara Cash. The Tristen Johnson, LLC is a business dedicated to education and training centered on DEI. Crowned Vitta LLC is a company focused on concepts of mindfulness, meta-awareness, and meaningful self-relationships and relationships with others. For the purposes of the chapter, we will use "we" when speaking about our work together as a partnership. We have worked together to create curriculum for a number of non-profit, corporate, and higher education institutions by coaching them on how to hold space for each other in equitable ways while utilizing the educational and theoretical expertise of the authors' backgrounds.

This chapter aims to inform the literature through three main pillars: background diversity and inclusion and the TDIEM program, narrative and challenges of the authors' experiences with TDIEM, and recommendations for further practice. The background section, or literature review, begins with a discussion about diversity and inclusion and the need for organizations to have both to be successful. It then provides a historical overview of mindfulness and finishes with a conversation about Equitable Mindfulness and how it relates to DEI, especially in group facilitation settings. Then, the background transitions into a general overview of the conceptual framework, Black feminism to showcase that our experiences navigating the world as Black women give us the skills needed to not only be diversity practitioners but to facilitate difficult conversations about DEI. Following the conceptual framework is the narrative section centering the authors' experiences working together as business partners and providing the TDIEM curriculum to employees of historically White non-profit organizations or student groups at historically White institutions (HWIs) of higher education. Finally, the authors will provide recommendations for practice for Black Women DEI practitioners who are looking for new ways to both center themselves and to engage participants in HWIs.

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