

NEWS

From the Desk of the ACCP President

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Belonging

As we experience this unique 2020 holiday season, I am reminded of the tremendous strides we've made this past year. As a profession, we have united in acknowledging health equity as a universal human right; confronted the old ways of doing things and taken definitive stands against racism, harassment, and discrimination; and bonded in our fight against COVID-19. Through our struggles, we have become both individually and collectively stronger. How can we sustain this momentum and create new paradigms as we move forward into 2021?

Foremost, we must embrace the concepts of *belonging* and *inclusive leadership*. In health care, we acknowledge the importance of a "common language" in our quest to maintain and achieve accurate communication, reproducible research, and optimal care. In 2020, we learned firsthand the need for this common language as leaders as well. Moreover, we learned that, without an understanding of the heritage of systemic racism and bias, we cannot effectively recognize the consequences of these realities. Yet unless we actively pursue inclusive leadership and create environments of belonging, the likelihood that others will share their experiences and challenges is remote. "When people are actively hiding their deepest truths, gifts, unique insights, struggles, and experiences," writes Jennifer Brown, "they aren't able to fully leverage those same things for their success."¹ This holds true not only for our students, patients, and colleagues, but also for ourselves. What is increasingly true in the business world is applicable to our profession as well: "Companies are adopting the stance that diversity and inclusion [are no longer] enough: there must also be a sense of belonging for all."²

Indeed, the concept of "belonging" is a vital component of inclusive leadership. As Brené Brown points out in *Braving the Wilderness*, "True belonging doesn't require you to change who you are; it requires you to *be* who you are [italics mine]."³ Being authentic about "who we are" as leaders within the context of "belonging" requires courage and intentionality as well as vulnerability. In her documentary "The Call to Courage," Brown discusses her research on these concepts and the challenges of incorporating them into our daily decisions.⁴ Throughout 2020, we have proven our ability to face challenges, be brave under fire, overcome obstacles, and endure persistent setbacks. In 2021, we have a rich opportunity to further these concepts, carry them forth, and create new models.

Furthermore, as individuals – "n's of 1," if you will – each of us can newly resolve to bring our *authentic self* and understanding of *belonging* to our interactions across all settings. I understand these terms are not typically used in our daily encounters or even self-assessments, yet as leaders as well as distinct individuals, we must learn to recognize and apply them. Reflecting on where and when we "show up" as our "authentic" selves is essential in our ongoing endeavor to achieve and sustain inclusive leadership in this new environment.

During the holidays, we contemplate our blessings, share our lives with others at a slower pace, and consider our resolutions for the coming year. I wish you a peaceful, healthy, and transformational 2020 holiday season. In so doing, I hope you will ponder how the concepts of inclusive leadership and belonging can become an even greater part of your sphere of influence. The descent of the New Year's Eve time-ball is upon us, and in our profession, the ball is in our court – so LET'S DO THIS!

References:

1. Brown J. *How to Be an Inclusive Leader: Your Role in Creating Cultures of Belonging Where Everyone Can Thrive*. Oakland, CA: Berrett-Koehler, 2019.
2. Knowledge@Wharton. *Beyond Diversity: How Firms Are Cultivating a Sense of Belonging*. March 26, 2019. Available at <https://knowledge.wharton.upenn.edu/article/belonging-at-work/>. Accessed December 21, 2020.
3. Brown B. *Braving the Wilderness: The Quest for True Belonging and the Courage to Stand Alone*. New York: Random House, 2017.
4. Brown B. *The Call to Courage* [documentary]. Netflix. April 19, 2019. Available at [imdb.com/title/tt10050766](https://www.imdb.com/title/tt10050766). Accessed December 21, 2020.