



a guide to
**Inclusive
Meetings**



Hello!

Dr. Jen Self, Queer JEDI, here and at your service. I am a racial & gender justice strategist and coach, CEO of Brick 13, and a licensed social worker to boot! Brick 13 is a Critical Equity Educational Consulting practice from which I partner with friends and colleagues from The Equity Institute, a collaborative of predominantly Black, Indigenous, and People of Color, queer, trans, nonbinary, and femme educators from throughout Washington state, the country, and the world.

I credit my early experiences as a gender outlaw and experiences as an elite athlete (played basketball at Cal, Ironman Finisher), competing against and building relationships with a racially diverse group of friends as impetus for my life's dedication to intersectional racial and gender justice.

I coach leaders to think about yourselves in complex, nuanced ways. How does your race, gender, cultural background, connection to resources (and more) matter in how you lead and how you wield power? How do you influence the diversification of nearly every aspect of humanity in your workplace? **You** have the power to leverage privilege and authority on behalf of justice, equity, liberation, and expansion. I encourage and teach leaders to be intentional and thoughtfully, pay attention to the micro-moments that build to macro-outcomes.

Excellence is just fundamentals on repeat. Micro to macro, every. single. moment. matters.

Inclusive, Equitable, and Liberatory Meeting Practices

Across types of organizations, from families to communities to corporations, social gatherings or formal meetings are ubiquitous. Humans gather because we are social, because we need one another, not simply for the work but for the connection, the contact, the humanity, and the love we experience when we are deeply connected.

While many of us have recognized the role of white supremacy in structural processes in the United States, many of us are just coming to understand the ways in which white supremacy culture is the norm throughout the business world. Its norms of perfectionism, sense of urgency, defensiveness, quantity over quality, worship of the written word, paternalism, either/or thinking, power hoarding, fear of open conflict, individualism, progress is bigger/more, objectivity, and right to comfort are sewn throughout every aspect of business culture and meetings are a microcosm of their most targeted impact.

When we are among those most negatively affected by these norms and we experience marginalization, erasure, minoritization, and varying levels of aggression during meetings, it harms our well-being and consequently our connectedness to our colleagues and our work.

This guide contains tips for every facet of your meeting, from initial planning to decision-making and closure. You may wish to start with the tips from one section, or draw ideas from a number of sections simultaneously to use in your next meeting. Consider reviewing this guide with your team to see what ideas they think will have the greatest impact.

Setting the Tone & Purpose

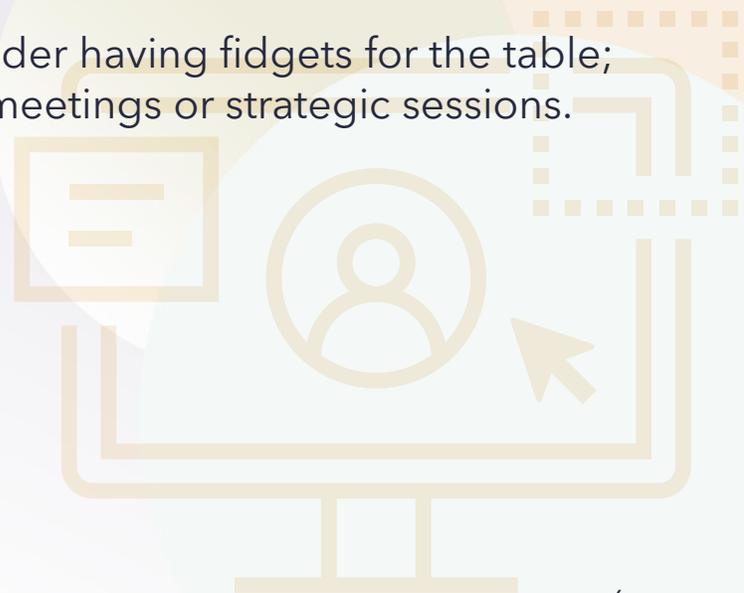
- Set a clear purpose for the meeting, include it in the invitation to the meeting.
- Give as much advance notice for your meeting as is possible, given your environment.
- Circle up: if you're in person, consider arranging meeting participants in a circle.
- Open with spaciousness. Spaciousness and humanizing work in tandem. Give room at the beginning of the meeting for folks to get grounded in the space, in themselves, in the work they are taking up in the meeting, etc. You can even add a short ground-in exercise. This helps bring everyone present and helps set a tone for your meeting.
- Set a humanizing tone - this can be achieved with a quick check in.
 - Use a weather report: e.g., My weather today is a little overcast, my mood has been kind of rough, some clouds rolling in.
 - Use imagery: Provide some pictures from which participants can choose which one fits how they are arriving, and they can share how it fits for them.
 - Check-in with smaller groups: Invite participants to talk with the people near them and share a little about their lives outside work.
- Maximize interaction. Use your time together to do things that require being together. Refrain from using it for updates and reports, rather do those through written communication. If need be, share major news ahead of time in a written form, but use your meeting time for collaboration, to answer questions, and process how the information affects each person's job.

Timing & Agenda

- Invite participants to share their ideal times to meet.
 - In a virtual world with employees likely all over the globe, be thoughtful about different time zones.
 - Re-think early morning meetings. Who is most negatively impacted? (single parents, mothers, working-class families, BIPOC folks pushed out of business districts and urban areas where historic red-lining and contemporary gentrification have restricted access, folks using public transit). Consider meeting at 9 rather than 8 a.m. allowing your employees to arrive without unnecessary stress.
 - For recurring meetings that are difficult for everyone to attend, consider an A/B schedule, alternating the timing of the meeting so that everyone can have some instances that are easy for their schedule.
- Schedule meetings for 25, 50, or 80 minutes; plan 20, 45, or 75 minutes of content. This allows for buffers of 5 minutes at the start of the meeting and 5 minutes at the end of the meeting.
 - Time has different cultural meaning globally and within U.S. co-cultures; e.g., time differs based on meaning, value, sequencing of events, clock time vs. event time, pace, temporal orientation, and more!
 - Building in this flex time reduces stress for everyone - those of us expecting everyone to arrive "on time," and those of us who arrive a few minutes later.
- Consider how you might invite participants to contribute to the agenda. Include open space for participants to identify the topics that are most important to discuss.

Materials, Resources & Environment

- Create any written materials in accessible formats; pdfs can be made accessible in Adobe Acrobat; Microsoft PowerPoint has great features for accessibility.
- Distribute written materials prior to meeting; bring extra copies.
- Hybrid meetings - camera needs to be centrally located so that remote participants can see everything that is happening. Audio is the most important here; even if you lose video, most folks can still participate.
- Remote meetings - be sure to use captions. Be clear about how the chat should be used, if people should raise hands to speak, etc.
- Consider using a virtual whiteboard to collaborate - great for introverts and for large meetings where there isn't time for everyone to speak. (Check out Miro, Mural, or Jamboard)
- Encourage folks to take care of their bodies - standing, stretching, etc.
- For in-person meetings, consider having fidgets for the table; particularly useful for longer meetings or strategic sessions.



Rituals & Facilitation

- We meet because we are social animals ~ but meetings are so often dehumanizing. To humanize one another, begin meetings with a brief check-in.
 - Ask folks to share something they are proud of.
 - Ask what folks are grateful for.
 - Check-in's can be done in large group, in pairs, in small groups.
- What are the ways in which you acknowledge Indigenous peoples, the Tribes in your area, and the stolen/unceded lands upon which you reside? How can you make land acknowledgments action oriented?
 - Take a self assessment
 - Become aware of, take part in the Land Back Movement
 - Learn about other ways to give back and not appropriate
- Share leadership - rotate facilitation, have different people lead different topics.
- Consider moderation - ask one participant to monitor chat, watch for raised hands, keep time, etc.

Decision-Making & Action Planning

- If you do not know where to start, consider...
 - using a tool
 - a framework
 - following an example
- Depending on the decisions you are making, consider trying different decision-making styles; e.g., consensus, consent-based decision, data-driven, intuitive, methodical/analytical, innovation, etc.
- If you try different styles of decision-making, be curious, pay attention, and take note of what you gain and what you lose with each style.
- If you are the leader in a top-down organization, are there some decisions that could be made by consensus or from the bottom-up?
 - If yes, which ones? Be transparent and clear.
 - Hold boundaries and live up to your agreements. This will build trust.
- Even if you have applied JEDI principles to all stages of your meeting, taking action requires intentionality & critical reflection.
 - Be willing to get excited about an idea, notice that you might be wrong, let it go, and be accountable.
 - Listen for feedback.
 - Pay attention to the power dynamics at play in the meeting and of you as a leader. Are they impacting the decision-making and action-planning?

Closing

- Review key points, decisions made, questions left open, & actions to be taken coupled with who is responsible for each.
 - Be clear about who will follow up and with what information.
 - Be clear about what your next steps are.
 - If something feels unfinished, it probably does for others too, make that transparent and if time allows ask how folks want to move forward with the unfinished item.
- If you are a primary leader, be clear about your commitments to the group so that you can be accountable to them, and they know what to expect.
- Close intentionally: make space for gratitude, acknowledgment, clarifying questions, and specifically ask folks to reflect on how the meeting went for them and collect the feedback in writing.

Practice

Think about an upcoming meeting (or a regular meeting series). Choose three (3) ideas from this guide to try out.

1.

2.

3.

Practice

After your meeting, reflect on:

What went well?

What could have gone better?

How can you make your next meeting even more inclusive?