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INCLUSIVE LEADERSHIP COMPASS

A short guide for
leaders in diverse,
complex teams

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INTRODUCTION



Why this guide? Why now?

Diversity. You know its promise, its strengths – and also its darker side.

At its best, it helps ideas grow, widens perspectives, and strengthens teams. At its worst, it fuels unspoken tensions and ego games, reinforces inner circles, and silences – or pushes out – members of minority groups.

My conviction is simple: diversity on its own does not create performance. It's a clear framework, supported by quality conversations, that turns it into a real force.

This is where the Inclusive Leadership Compass comes in.

It's not a GPS with a fixed route, nor a checklist of "right answers". It's a concrete, human tool to orient you in four key directions:

- Presence – being here, grounded and aware.
- Connection – being with others as humans, not just roles.
- Courage – saying what needs to be said, without excluding.
- Clarity – making things explicit and aligned so people can act together.

You're not starting from scratch.

Your experience, instincts, and values already hold the foundations of inclusive leadership.

This Compass brings them back to the surface so that, in moments of tension or ambiguity, you can:

- pause instead of reacting on autopilot,
- consider impact and fairness, not just speed,
- turn everyday friction into fuel for engagement, collaboration, and performance.

My hope is that these pages will help you see – and bring to life – the richness of your teams, conversation after conversation.

Catherine



HOW TO USE THIS SHORT GUIDE



1. Choose your focus

- Skim the four directions.
- Notice which one feels most relevant, exposed, or challenging in your current context.
- Or jump to the Quick Self-Assessment page 12 and see which direction scores lowest or matters most.

2. Test one move in real life

For the direction you chose:

- Read the short story.
- Pick one practice and apply it in a real meeting, decision, or conversation this week.
- Use the questions to observe what changes in you, in others, or in the outcome.

One small, repeated move beats a big one-off effort.

3. Reflect and re-orient

- After a few days, ask: *What actually changed? For me? For the people around me?*
- Once a month, redo the Quick Self-Assessment to see how your Compass is evolving.
- Choose the next direction that would make the biggest difference now.

You can use this guide on your own, with your team, or as a starting point for a deeper journey through coaching, workshops, or talks.

THE COMPASS AT A GLANCE



Four directions. One simple move at a time.
Use this page as a quick reminder when things move fast.

PRESENCE - BEING THERE

Focus

Your inner anchor in a moving landscape – choosing how you show up instead of running on autopilot.

Inclusive question

“In this moment, who am I really present to – and who might I be missing?”

CONNECTION - BEING WITH

Focus

Turning Presence into belonging and contribution – people feel seen as humans with contexts, not just as “resources”.

Inclusive question

“Whose reality is not yet visible or safe in this room?”

COURAGE - DARING TO SAY WHAT IS NEEDED

Focus

Relational daring – naming impact, values, and fairness without turning people into the problem.

Inclusive question

“What’s one small brave step to make this fairer for more people?”

CLARITY - MAKING THINGS EXPLICIT & ALIGNED

Focus

Making things clear enough so people can act together, not just “decode how things work here”.

Inclusive question

“What needs to be made explicit so everyone – not just insiders – knows where they stand?”



PRESENCE

Being there

Presence isn't about doing more; it's about showing up on purpose. When you're grounded and aware, everyone in the room can breathe and think again.

Lila



Presence in action

The meeting is almost over. Two senior voices have filled most of the time. Cameras are off in another location. Newer colleagues haven't said a word.

Lila feels herself speeding up inside. There's pressure to "decide and move on". She also knows the decision will hit people in another region hardest – the ones who have stayed silent so far.

For a second, she thinks: "Stay quiet. It's not your meeting."

Instead, she places her feet on the floor, exhales slowly, and asks herself:

“How do I want to show up right now?”

“Before we close,” she says, “can we pause for one minute? I’d really like to hear from people closest to the clients, especially in [X region]. What are you seeing?”

Two quiet voices come in. The decision shifts slightly. Not dramatically – but enough to land more fairly for those who were invisible ten minutes ago.



Presence Practice 60-Second-Arrival

Use it before a key meeting, 1:1, or tricky conversation.

- Put your feet on the floor.
 - Exhale slowly.
 - Ask: *“What energy do I want to bring in the next 30 minutes?”*
 - Choose one word (curious, clear, fair, firm, supportive...).
 - Ask: *“Who might find it harder to speak in this setting – and how can I make it easier for them today?”*
 - Let these answers guide who you look at, who you invite in, and how fast you go.
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Questions to explore Presence

- When I’m under pressure, who gets most of my attention (senior, vocal, similar to me)?
- Whose reactions do I rarely register unless there’s a crisis?
- If my Presence today were a picture (storm, lighthouse, busy crossroads...), what would it be – and what would I like it to become?



CONNECTION

Being with

Connection turns a collection of busy people into a real team. When people feel seen and safe, their ideas stop holding back.

Omar



Connection in action

On paper, Omar's hybrid team is fine. Targets met. Projects delivered.

In meetings, it's another story. HQ talks. One office stays on mute. One colleague almost never speaks unless called by name. Omar closes his laptop thinking: "We're missing something, and I don't know what."

Next week, he changes one thing.

"Before we dive into the agenda," he says, "quick round:

What's one thing you're bringing with you today – about work or life – that might colour how you show up?"

Silence.

Then someone mentions a local crisis affecting clients.
Another mentions exhaustion after late-night calls.
The quiet colleague says they're caring for a sick relative.

The tone softens. Omar adjusts the agenda and redistributes one heavy task. No miracle. But one clear signal: your reality matters here.



Connection Practice Inclusive Check-Ins

You don't need to solve everything that appears. You simply know who is really in the room before you decide with them.

In 1:1s

- Ask: *"What's one thing from your world right now that would be useful for me to know?"*
- Listen without interrupting or fixing.
- Reflect back: *"What I'm hearing is that ... matters a lot for you right now."*

In team meetings

- Ask: "Before the agenda, one sentence each:
 - *How are you arriving?*
 - *What's one thing that might affect how you participate today?"*
- Rotate who speaks first.
- Gently invite quieter people if they're willing.
- Normalise a range of answers (tired, stressed, quiet-but-present...).



Questions to explore Connection

- Whose stories, values, constraints, and motivations do I know well in my team? Whose do I hardly know at all?
- Who comes to me easily – and who rarely asks for my time unless it's formal?
- If the level of Connection in my team were an image (closed circle, scattered islands, web of bridges...), what would I see?



COURAGE

Daring to say what is needed

Courageous leadership names what others only feel but don't dare to say.

Every honest, uncomfortable conversation is an investment in trust and fairness.

Aïcha



Courage in action

"We should send a native speaker. It's safer with this client."

The sentence drops. A few nods. Across the table, Leïla looks down. She runs most of the client work in that region – in her second language.

Aïsha feels the tension. The remark wasn't meant as an attack, but it landed like one. She doesn't want to shame her colleague. She does want to stop the slide.

"Can I check something with you all?" she says.

"I hear that we want the client to feel confident. At the same time, when we say 'native speaker only', it lands as if colleagues who work in a second language are automatically less credible – even when they have the strongest relationship."

Silence. No one explodes. No one walks out.

"What if we're explicit about the real risks?" she continues. "If it's about complex negotiations, we can offer language support or pair people up. But let's not use 'native' as a shortcut for 'good enough'."

The group reopens options – this time, including Leïla properly.



Courage Practice The "One Step Braver" Question

Use it next time something feels off – a pattern, a comment, a decision – and you hesitate to speak.

- Pause and ask yourself:
"What would a version of this conversation look like that is just one step braver than what I usually do?"
 - Craft one sentence you are willing to say, for example:
 - *"There's something I've been hesitating to raise because it feels sensitive, but it matters for how we work together."*
 - *"I notice a pattern that seems to impact certain colleagues more. I'd like us to look at it together."*
- You're not aiming for heroism. You're training your courage muscle in real conditions.
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Questions to explore Courage

- What topics or behaviours do I quietly avoid addressing, even though I know they're misaligned with our values or unfair to some?
- When someone names a thorny issue (bias, exclusion, unequal load), is my first inner reaction defence, guilt, curiosity, or relief?
- If my Courage were a metaphor today (whisper, megaphone, steady drumbeat, flickering flame...), what would it be?



CLARITY

Making things explicit & aligned

Clarity is kindness for people navigating complexity and change. When things are explicit and aligned, people can act together instead of guessing the rules.

Sarah



Clarity in action

By 8:45, Sarah has already read three versions of the same question:

“Is my team affected by the restructuring?”

At the leadership meeting, slides fly by. At 9:47, someone says: “We’re aligned on the direction. Comms will find the right words.” Another adds: “Let’s stay high-level. People know change is coming.”

Chairs shuffle. Laptops close.

Sarah doesn't move. In her mind, she sees faces, not org charts:

- the manager who learnt about the last change on LinkedIn,
- the analyst who spent two months wondering if she should look for another job,
- the colleague who told her: "It's not the decision, it's the not-knowing that breaks trust."

"Before we all run," she says, "can we stay two more minutes? I'd like us to write three sentences together:

1. What is decided now.
2. What is still open.
3. What does not change for the next three months.

If we don't do it here, every location will improvise its own version."

Ten minutes later, they have three clear lines.

When Sarah shares them, questions appear – but rumours don't. People may not love the decision. Still, they know where they stand.



Clarity Practice "Decided/ Open/ Stable" Close

- When you close a discussion or send an update, take one minute to answer:
 1. What is decided now is...
 2. What is still open is...
 3. What does not change for now is...
- Share these three lines in writing or out loud.
- Then ask:

"If you had to explain this in one sentence to someone new in your team, what would you say?"
- If the answers are very different, sharpen your three lines.



Questions to explore Clarity

- In which situations do people around you often say: *"I'm not sure what they really want"*?
- Who in my team spends the most energy decoding unwritten rules or reading between the lines?
- Where do I stay vague to avoid friction – and what might it cost those furthest from power or information?

QUICK SELF-ASSESSMENT



- For each statement, give yourself a score from 0 to 10: 0 = Not at all true right now - 10 = Very true
- Then report your scores on the Compass and reflect.

PRESENCE

- 01** In key moments, I am able to slow down, be grounded and intentional rather than reacting on autopilot. Score: / 10
- 02** I notice how my words and decisions land for different people, not only for those who are most similar to me or most vocal. Score: / 10
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CONNECTION

- 03** In my team, people feel safe enough to share concerns or minority views, even when they go against the current. Score: / 10
- 04** I actively pay attention to those whose reality is less visible (remote colleagues, junior staff, people from different backgrounds). Score: / 10
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COURAGE

- 05** When something feels unfair or misaligned with our values, I am willing to name it and open a conversation. Score: / 10
- 06** I address tensions early instead of waiting for them to grow or hoping they will solve themselves. Score: / 10
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CLARITY

- 07** People around me know what is decided, what is still open, and what does not change for now. Score: / 10
- 08** Expectations, roles and success criteria are explicit enough that people don't have to guess or decode hidden rules. Score: / 10



Reading your compass

Use your answers to choose which direction to explore first in this guide.

Looking at your compass:

- What stands out to you first?
- Which direction feels like a current strength you can rely on?
- Which direction, if you moved it only 1-2 points higher, would already make a meaningful difference for you and your team?



Your Next Degree of Shift

You're not aiming for perfection – just a one-degree shift at a time.

You might choose to one practice from this Short Guide.

At the end of the week, ask yourself:

- What changed in the room?
- What changed in me?
- Who felt more seen, safer, or clearer as a result?



Going Further

You don't have to explore the next steps alone. Let's work together.

1:1 Coaching for Leaders

Tailored support to turn Presence, Connection, Courage, and Clarity into concrete habits in your daily decisions and conversations.

Workshops & Team Labs

Interactive sessions for leadership teams who want to work on real cases and build shared, practical rituals for inclusive collaboration.

Keynotes & Talks

Experience-based talks on inclusive leadership that turn diversity's friction into sparkling conversations, engagement, and innovation.



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