

# Inclusive Pagan Communities

## Introduction

Creating inclusivity within a community means being welcome to all people. Inclusivity starts with being conscious of our filters and biases. Being open to being self aware and hearing directly how our actions may be ableist and or insensitive. In order to create inclusivity, we have to question what has been in place up to this point. That means sitting in the discomfort of dismantling systems that have existed prior to us.

The leading components to inclusivity according to Hedrick.com

1. Self awareness
2. Courage
3. Vulnerability
4. Curiosity
5. Empathy
6. Additional point-Respect differences

## Inclusivity

### Best Practices to consider

1. Inclusivity starts at the top, the clergy and board, if existent, need to be open minded and approachable. Example: Be receptive to your community when they bring information to you.
2. Have a group that actively prevents “othering.” This means avoiding forcing members into categories, or pushing certain ways of behavior or thinking. Example: Avoid assigning roles based on gender or gender presentation. Take volunteers based on their commitment to a role and not how it’s ordinarily presented
3. Create a group that does not default to the majority knows best, or the majority sets the standards.
4. Have surveys, conversations, chats... make all channels of communication open for the people to be heard. Example:

use SurveyMonkey as a platform to express how an event went or to express opportunities for improvement.

5. Have a zero tolerance for bullying or harassing behavior.

Example: Clear and concise rules on how to handle these behaviors. Be prepared to turn people away when they show belligerent behavior

6. Constantly look for opportunities for improvement

7. Avoid compliance culture- having bare minimums doesn't serve anyone but the majority.

Example:

A transgender support group met in a building that is wheelchair accessible, but the room of the meeting was not accessible by wheelchair.

8. Make it known that your community/organization strives for full inclusivity. Examples: At Pagan pride, include in your brochures that you welcome everyone regardless of sexual orientation, gender, ability status, ethnicities, races etc.....

9. Inclusivity is not synonymous with using politics to be disruptive.
10. Send out a ritual script or summary beforehand to help others and/or new attendees be comfortable

## Mental Health and Disabilities

1. Default to Kindness. Example: if someone says something ignorant, politely explain how what was said could be insensitive.
2. When choosing activities and locations- ensure they are handicap accessible. There are various mobility and sensory situations to consider.
3. Consider how members may react to activities, ie triggers, sensory friendliness for sound or flashing lights. Example:

reconsider aspects of the ritual like how loud the leader is, or having an ASL interpreter for the hearing impaired

4. Be receptive to the needs of your community- be open to corrections. Realize no one person knows everything. There is always room to grow.

5. Make it a safe space.

The term **safe space, according to Wikipedia**, refers to places "intended to be free of bias, conflict, criticism, or potentially threatening actions, ideas, or conversations"

Ex: Support groups, like-minded communities

## Consent

1. Consent definition: permission for something to happen or agreement to do something.

a. Informed enthusiastic consent is important.

For example, an immunocompromised person may not want to partake of a shared drinking vessel, or using an alcoholic drink could exclude a recovering alcoholic from participating

2. Asking if it is OK to hug, touch, kiss (passing the kiss), tap, sprinkle etc. before doing it
3. Provide procedure in bylaws for reporting violations of one's person and/ or personal space and/ or sense of human dignity etc.
4. Do not assume someone needs help, i.e. standing or navigating a space. Ask before touching
5. Do not assume gender identities
6. Learn about closed practices to avoid cultural appropriation
7. Don't share others personal information or stories without consent.

8. Practice consent exercises where everyone practices answering no. This helps build comfort in saying no in various scenarios

## Conclusion

Our intention for this worship is to create safe spaces within pagan communities.