



MARIJKE CORNELIS

Diversity and inclusion coach
Founder of the [Diversity Academy](#)



Marijke helps leaders connect in the context of diversity. According to her, everything starts with connection.

IMPORTANCE OF CO-CREATION

'You stimulate connectedness by organising non-work-related activities such as a team building, picnics and drinks. But everyone in the workplace doesn't expect the same from these events. Which is why it's best to develop activities in consultation with your entire team. So you can be sure that you're offering something that's tailored to everyone's needs and wishes. Which, in turn, increases the positive impact of the event.'

RELATIONSHIP COMES BEFORE CONTENT

'A meaningful conversation about the diversity of philosophies of life requires a strong relationship between the parties conversing. Relationship comes before content. So invest enough time in building that relationship. Shared solutions to philosophy of life issues such as prayer in the workplace will then emerge more easily and quickly. And will automatically enjoy more support and acceptance.'

COMMUNICATION SKILLS THAT CONNECT

'Offer training courses focused on communication skills that promote connectedness. For example, foremen and direct superiors regularly have to mediate conflicts and discussions in the workplace. They need the right skills for this. As you don't want such issues to have a negative impact on employee connectedness.'

AUTHENTICITY

'In order to facilitate connectedness, it's also important that the feeling of belonging is authentic. If not, it doesn't work. Especially when it comes to diversity in terms of philosophies of life. When someone has to cover up something at work, that fundamentally expresses their identity, it's incredibly difficult for that person to feel connected to the work environment.'

RESPECTFUL CURIOSITY

'People often have a certain reticence when it comes to philosophies of life. They often don't dare to ask questions. Yet there is nothing wrong with being curious, as long as it's communicated with respect. For example, ask open questions - and at the same time check whether the question is okay. We have to get past our fear in order to really communicate with each other. It's the only way to achieve mutual understanding and a sense of belonging.'