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From the Portland Business Journal:

<https://www.bizjournals.com/portland/news/2020/02/07/opinion-the-missing-piece-in-most-companies-equity.html>

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## Opinion: The missing piece in most companies' equity plans

Incight's Emily Purry explains how businesses can do far more good.



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Emily Purry of Incight

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By Emily Purry – Incight  
Feb 7, 2020

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I'm sure there are parents who can relate to this, but my six-year-old asks a ton of questions. “Why is the sky blue?” is asked with the same curiosity and innocence as, “Why is my skin color different than yours?” and “What’s wrong with your eyes?”

I could avoid answering some of the harder questions, but as all parents know, doing so often has uncomfortable consequences. In the long run, avoiding my daughter's curiosity doesn't serve her well. I want her to learn about others and to grow and accept everyone. The only way I can ensure this is to have the conversations she wants to have.

Why do I bring this up? Because we are all “six years old” when it comes to uncomfortable topics. Diversity, equity, inclusion and access are words that are sparking some big conversations in the workplace right now. This conversation is so important, now more than ever.

However, when we think of these topics, typically our conversations are focused on race and gender. Both are very important, but for some reason disability is never included in that fold. Disability should and needs to be included in the conversation along with race and gender. Otherwise, no matter your diversity efforts, you will never have a truly inclusive environment.

I believe this stems from how a lot of us were raised. Often, the response from our parents when we asked questions on disability were, “That’s rude, don’t look.” As a result, the topic of disability became a shameful thing, so we never talked about it. Now we’re all grown, working and trying to be the best, most open and inclusive people we can be. But we don’t have much of a foundation, especially when it comes to disability.

So we’re trying, and we’re messing up. This is happening in all realms of diversity and equity. How many people have launched a diversity program and have miserably failed? Now they’re scared to take action.

So what actually needs to happen? First, we have to create a foundation. What do we know? What don't we know? We’re all "six-year olds" when it comes to this topic, and we must remove the shame around that. We need to accept that we don't have all of the answers. We need to start asking the tough questions. It's the only way we can begin to improve our knowledge and understanding.

Your challenge? Ask about accessibility. At the next staff, team or leadership meeting, ask the hard questions, and make sure the people who need to be at the table are there; make sure everyone is heard. Not in a leadership position? Go to your leaders and HR teams and ask what they're doing to include disability into the conversation.

Most of all, get comfortable with the uncomfortable, and start making a difference in your workplace today. Don't be afraid to ask a question, even if it's a "six-year-old" question. We'll never grow until we are ready to learn from each other.

*Emily Purry is Portland-based Incight's director of independence and a legally blind equity and disability advocate.*