

# Celebrate Diversity

#MOCelebratesDiversity



Each month, the Office of Equal Opportunity (OEO) celebrates the diversity of our state's workforce. We look forward to providing content that embraces the differences that make us better together. Check us out [here!](#)



## The Value of Difficult Conversations

By William Wehmer and Austin Kerns

It's normal for us to find things in common and avoid disagreements. While being a "team player" is an important part to getting things done, engaging in difficult conversations can help strengthen the team. When we engage in these difficult conversations in the right circumstances, with the right tools, we can create an impact and advance the organization as a whole. If we all agreed 100% of the time, or only worked with those with similar viewpoints – we would be in a stagnate state and our abilities to adapt would suffer.

We all have many different perspectives – whether it be politics or what kind of milk you prefer. Being able to recognize these differences and talk about them is an important step toward finding a common ground. While starting the conversation can be difficult, make sure you are open to listening. If you aren't ready, take some time and revisit the conversation at a later date. Being an active listener, and fully hearing what the other person is trying to say is a major key to understanding their point of view.

When a difficult conversation arises, it is important to be aware of our biases. Biases are the attitudes or stereotypes which affect our actions and decision-making ability. Everyone has biases, and they directly affect how we are able to communicate and listen to others. Oftentimes, we are more likely to trust and agree with those who are most similar to us because it is more comfortable. Be sure to actively listen, show empathy, and repeat what the other person is saying to make sure you fully understand. This allows the other person to feel seen and heard, and allows you to fully grasp what they are saying.

Having difficult conversations isn't anyone's favorite – but they are valuable. Without disagreements, we wouldn't have the abilities to problem-solve, grow, and learn.

**To continue your learning, here are resources about communicating through difficult conversations:**

[Disagreement is Good](#), Article by Carly Fiorina

[Communicating Through Disagreement](#), LinkedIn Learning by Michael Shermer

[Unconscious Bias](#), LinkedIn Learning by Stacey Gordon

Contact us if you have ideas on diverse groups to celebrate at [CelebrateDiversity@oa.mo.gov](mailto:CelebrateDiversity@oa.mo.gov).