

## EQUALITY-FOCUSED

### What is Equality-Focused?

**Equality-focus is a recognisable sense of acceptance when dealing with others. It works with the attitude framework that all humans are equal and therefore need to be treated as such.**

### Why is it important to be equality-focused?

“Equality-Focused” has a complimentary relationship with other High Ideals values of “Fairness”, “Valuing Others” and “Celebrating Diversity”. Although similarities exist amongst these values, equality-focused is a distinct value which looks specifically at the attitude and belief system, and corresponding behaviours, that says all people should be treated equally.

The interesting thing about equality is that society has developed a framework for exploring it that is based on “inequality”. We tend to be more actively engaged in personal and professional conversations to avoid any individual or group from feeling that they are unequal to another individual or group, and to ensure we don’t treat them as unequal.

Of course, there are still numerous battlefronts for this conversation, around the world, in various contexts and comparing the inequality of various types of people.

At the core of this is the desire and need to not be told “we are not good enough” in any way, shape or form. And for some of us, it is the desire and need that no one else ever be told that or made to feel that way. We essentially see this in today’s society as someone standing up for their own rights and/or the rights of others, because there are so many pressing and relevant examples of inequality present.

So, although it’s a simplified view, for our purposes in this document the importance and purpose of having equality-focused as a High Ideals value is to address the cause that no human, in any situation at any time, should be made to feel less worthy, important or valuable than any other person.

Whether we are discussing personal or professional contexts, we have the responsibility to support equality for ourselves and others.

As a professional skill, we need to also look at current trends in the commercial business environments where social responsibility is being demanded by the consumer markets on a bigger scale than ever before seen in history.

Achieving equality for all is a challenging task and one that humanity will continue to debate, explore and work toward.

As High Ideals professionals, our task is to first explore our attitudes and beliefs about equality, have a vision and mission to treat all people equally and to follow through and role model behaviours which support the positive, humane, respectful and caring engagement and treatment of all people, including our teammates, vendors, alliance partners and of course, our customers.

## Why is it so easy to slip up in the area of equality-focused?

There are two distinct areas where equality-focused can be undermined.

The first of these is by simply not making equality a priority. The reasons for this could range anywhere from simply not being aware of the need for equality-focused behaviours, through to choices being made to maintain inequality in order to achieve certain power or commercial gains. This document will not explore the variables of such situations or provide judgement commentary.

The other area which could undermine equality is when the attitude of one or more people, possibly the environment as a whole, is actually focused on inequality. This can be a tricky situation as identifying areas of inequality is important for the purpose of correcting such situations, however this can also develop a “lack” mentality where the majority of people are focusing on what they don’t have instead of actually creating the thing they want. Although it could be argued that both frameworks are focusing on equality, that’s not necessarily true in some situations. There is the possibility that an individual or group could be so focused on the inequality they are experiencing or perceive to be experiencing, that they potentially create more opportunities to experience inequality.

The essential corrective action for both undermining areas is to focus on identifying and defining the desired state of equality and to demonstrate the behaviours (take action) to make equality real and measurable instead of simply conceptual.

## Tips for being equality-focused

- Create a “charter” or “values statement” which clearly identifies the core professional values, including the commitment to treating all people equally. Such a document may work best if it includes the specific, observable and measurable behaviours that when consistently demonstrated would achieve the equality environment committed to.
- Develop a personal and professional understanding of the difference between viewing all people as fundamentally equal in terms of rights and ways of interacting as compared to evaluating someone’s skill, competency and qualifications to perform a task or function. It is necessary to measure people against a benchmark in certain situations while inappropriate to evaluate the worth of a person at a humanistic level.

## Characteristics and/or Behaviours of a person who is equality-focused?

- They treat all people fairly.
- They challenge inequality when they see it and/or experience it.
- They raise awareness in others about the need and value of equality.
- They respond to feedback well regarding their own behaviours.
- They explore options to create and maintain sustainable equality professional environments.

### Evaluate your own perspective on equality-focus

- What does “equality-focused” mean to you? How do you recognise the attitude AND behaviours when you see them in yourself and/or others?
- What are your strengths in terms of equality-focused? How do you leverage these and for what purpose?
- What are your opportunities for improvement in terms of equality-focused? What specifically could change and who would benefit from the change and how?
- What reputation do you have in terms of being equality-focused? How did you earn this reputation, regardless of whether it’s positive or negative? How do you feel about this reputation?
- What feedback have you received from others about whether you are equality-focused or not? What have you done with that feedback?
- What’s the greatest lesson, personally and/or professionally, you’ve learnt regarding equality? What did you do with this, or how did you apply that lesson?

### Improve your degree of equality-focus

After you have completed your evaluation, if you have noticed some room for improvement, you might like to try some of the following strategies:

- Seek out a person (or persons) who you believe consistently demonstrate “equality-focus”. Interview them and ask them questions about their own development process to get to where they are now. Consider that this is a mentoring session where it may be expected that you will make a commitment to this person at the end of the interview and that it’ll be necessary for you to follow through.
- Ask for feedback from your colleagues, staff, vendors, partners and customers about how they see your professional attitudes and behaviours as being equality-focused or not. Give them permission to be honest, acknowledge and thank them for their feedback and make commitments to them about what you will do with the feedback. You may need to prepare yourself for the possibility that you’ll be asked to make agreements with various stakeholders so that they can be more involved, be listened to and that their needs will be met more consistently in the future.
- Consider getting coached or mentored in this area (or any other area you’d like to develop) and work with the coach to determine the actual habits which are effective and those which are negatively impacting your performance of being equality-focused. If you’re not sure where to start to look for a coach or mentor, the High Ideals member directory includes members who offer these services, which may be a good place to begin your search as you’ll know that those practitioners have also achieved the High Ideals credentials.

## Further resources

If you would like to develop further in the area of equality focus, the following resources may be worth considering.

Please note that High Ideals does not endorse or receive any direct benefit from recommending the following resources. The list is simply a suggestive collection of materials that members of the High Ideals management team have found useful in their own development.

- <http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/equality/> - This is a very well researched and constructed essay on equality published by the Stanford Encyclopaedia of Philosophy. It could be useful in terms of understanding various view points of the concept of equality and its application.
- **Building Workplace Equality: Ethics, Diversity and Inclusion** by Nelarine Cornelius – This book provides a new model of workplace equality based on capabilities theory. This approach identifies actions which organisations can take to evaluate and improve the ways in which they support equality for all members.
- **Aiming Higher: 25 stories of how companies prosper by combining sound management and social vision** by David Bollier
- <http://www.high-ideals.com> – Check out the Member Directory section for High Ideals members who offer services which could support you, such as coaching, mentoring or consulting on High Ideals criteria/values.

## Author and editor acknowledgement

**High Ideals** would like to acknowledge and thank Noel Posus for his work on this document. Noel Posus is the Director of Training, Research and Development for High Ideals as well as a professional coach, educator and author. To find out more about Noel, please visit his profile on the High Ideals directory by clicking [here](#) and search by name.

This document is part of the **High Ideals** Criteria Information Series, edited by Claire Stretch. For more information on Claire please visit her profile on the High Ideals directory by clicking [here](#) and search by name.

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