

What is tokenism and how can I avoid it?

Transcript

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Tokenism, what is tokenism? It is a symbolic action. It is an experience or practice that may appear to promote diversity and be inclusive, when in reality, the effect intention, or lack of, behind it is quite different. The prevalence of tokenism regarding diversity inclusion, and inclusive practices, and steps we take to avoid it needs to be considered regularly. Tokenism is a practice or policy of making no more than a symbolic effort or gesture, as in offering opportunities to minorities equal to those the majority already have. A comment was made by Kate from SNAICC, Secretariat of National Aboriginal and Islander Child Care, about her feelings around inclusion in an early learning environment.

She said, "And once I'm inside in the early learning service, it's very real, embedded practice, so it's not tokenistic, not just a table with Aboriginal stuff on it. I want to see how I can relate to things I do at home within your centre." This comment was in reference to Kate's cultural heritage but could also be applied in many of the diverse situations as we mentioned earlier in this webinar. Tokenism can be a starting point if you don't know what to do. It needs to engage critical thinking and reflective practice, and multiple perspectives, curiosity. Your view of tokenism can change as your understanding grows.

Moving beyond tokenism is done through intentionality, authenticity, and a genuine commitment to continuous learning, action, reflection, and improvement. It is also important to recognise that both the experience of and goals for embracing, embedding, and including diversity are forever. Remember, this first involves considering our own personal views, and judgments, our beliefs, and values before we even think to react. Decisions about inclusive practices can be made, keeping in mind that the goal is, that everyone feels included, welcomed, and that our behaviour reflects this.