

How to decolonise workspaces

Tips for decolonising your work environments

Note for both white and for black and brown practitioners: Be aware of, and actively break down social barriers – make sure there are not ‘expatriate groups’ and ‘local groups’ in your workspaces.

Yielding Power

- ☐ Deconstruct any meeting spaces which implicitly or explicitly establish your or your white colleagues as superior (for example, being seated at the head of the table, or seated on a chair and not on a mat).
- ☐ Foster spaces where black and brown colleagues feel comfortable expressing the intersect between their beliefs and work, especially belief in God and Christian views.
- ☐ Hold discussions about the professional cultural environment of your office space. Does the office feel like it is dominated by white professional cultural expectations? How is this reflected in terms of dress, meals and eating; expectations around things like noise, laughter, and the presence of children after school; hours of operation; and acceptance of cultural elements like drinking kava or putting biblical scriptures on the walls.
- ☐ Observe Pacific protocols in all engagements with stakeholders. Recognise the additional burden on black and brown staff to educate white staff on local customs and protocols.

Wielding Power

- ☐ Accept sitting at the head of the table or in other positions of ‘spatial power’ in meetings. Encourage your black and brown colleagues to do likewise.
- ☐ Do not self-censor or remove reference to your beliefs from your discourse.
- ☐ Proactively discuss with your white colleagues your family and cultural obligations and explain that you can’t always separate your communal obligations from your professional life. Your white colleagues may have no understanding of your obligations and the impact the office culture has on you if you don’t open that conversation with them.
- ☐ Discuss with managers the local customs and protocols that should be observed and explain how doing so could build affinity between the program and the communities it works with. Proactively advise on the formal protocols to welcome and farewell guests.