

As a member of TEAM RVH

I BELONG HERE

My name is **Abby Cole**, Radiation Therapist.

My story of belonging is centred around a seemingly innocent question I get asked at work: **“Where are you from?”**

This is an example of a **micro-aggression**, which is a comment or action that subtly and often unconsciously or unintentionally expresses a prejudiced attitude toward a member of a marginalized group.

When only I am asked this question in a room full of coworkers, it implies that I am “other” or that I don’t belong, which can create negative feelings and feelings of alienation.

From my own experience, the reply to this question is a question of my own: **“Why do you ask?”** Sometimes people giggle. Sometimes people look back at me like I didn’t understand their question. Sometimes people truly use it as a moment of reflection about why they did ask.

How can TEAM RVH help create a stronger culture of belonging?

It’s about communicating with your coworkers. If you see something like this happen, afterwards, ask what you can do to support them. Give them the floor to speak and take the time to truly be present and listen to what they have to say. I spoke about this situation with my team because it happens often. It was triggering to me and I wanted to explain why and the feelings it brings on. And what was really lovely is that my teammates took the time to listen, to hear me out, and to really appreciate and empathize with the way I felt. You feel supported. You can focus on your job because you know your coworkers and your employer have your back.

You are not alone.

This happens. And when you feel uncomfortable about it, it’s not okay and there are people here to support you. I wanted to step out and take time to tell you myself that it matters – **YOU matter – and you belong here.**

What is DEIB - Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Belonging?

Diversity – encompasses the variety of human differences (visible and invisible)

Equity – fair (not equal) and impartial access to all opportunities and resources

Inclusion – the act of including, involving and empowering others

Belonging – a culture where people feel like they are an important member of a group simply because of who they are



Do you have a belonging story?

RVH’s DEIB Council wants to share your experiences and celebrate RVH’s diversity. Contact the council with your belonging story by emailing: dicouncil@rvh.on.ca