First Chapter from:
Reversing the Ostrich Approach to Diversity: Pulling your head out of the sand, by A. S. Tolbert, Ph.D.

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Chapter 1

The Ostrich, the Sand, and You: What's the diversity connection?

What does diversity have to do with an ostrich? Consider this definition from the American Heritage Dictionary:

> **os·trich** (¼s"tr¹ch, ôs"-) *n.*, *pl.* **ostrich** or **os·trich·es**. **1.a.** A large, swift-running flightless bird (Struthio camelus) of Africa, characterized by a long bare neck, small head, and two-toed feet. It is the largest living bird. **b.** A rhea. **2. One who tries to avoid disagreeable situations by refusing to face them.**

Hm-m-m. So, our dear struthio camelus can run its tail feathers off and flap 'til it flops but, alas, can never take flight. Well, when it comes to diversity issues, neither can we. All the running, hiding and avoidance (a.k.a. the ostrich approach) won't change what's going on around us. And while the image of an ostrich burying its head in the sand is based on myth rather than fact, it is the perfect icon to depict the many avoidance tactics we use to deal with the tough stuff. The tough issues won't go away just because we refuse to look at them.

Yet, dealing with diversity challenges doesn't have to be painful. And it doesn't have

to take weeks out of your already over-stuffed schedule. This book simplifies some of the complex concepts of diversity work to make them immediately applicable in your day-to-day life. In the following pages you'll find basic, to-the-point information followed by do-it-now action steps that can quickly set the wheels of change in motion. It's the kind of change that also brings an opportunity to positively impact relationships, productivity, and profits. Who couldn't use a little more of that?

Here is a brief description of each of the five simple concepts you'll be exploring in the following chapters:

1 ***Stop Walking On Eggshells: Define and use positive confrontation.*** Relationships are built, and you can influence how they are developed and shaped. Yet, there is often a lot of energy-draining, stutter-stepping going on that hinders relationship development with those of different cultures or abilities. You can stop walking on eggshells by taking risks, appropriately confronting difficult situations, and managing conflict. Once you do, you will benefit from strong, healthy relationships that can help you reach both personal and professional goals.

2 ***I'm Okay, But "They" Need Help: Why should I change?*** There are rewards for implementing personal change. However, change is unlikely without identifying those benefits and making a conscious choice to implement the changes needed to acquire them. You'll learn about and use the head, heart, and hand model to help make you more aware of the things you say and do. This model emphasizes that, in every situation, you choose your response. By recognizing your ability to change outcomes by making different response choices, you can begin to experience the benefits of those changes.

3 ***Help Others Matter: Unleash the power of diversity.*** You are either included or excluded by others, which causes you to feel and behave in certain ways. You also include or exclude others. Individuals who feel they are being

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excluded often respond with less motivation and productivity. You have the power to change that response by choosing words and actions that make them feel they matter.

4 ***Broaden Your World View: See things as they are not as you are.*** All of us have biases, prejudices, and stereotypical ideas of others; we are all ethnocentric. It's part of being human. However, not admitting to these negative social forces damages your relationships with others, the bottom line, and your potential to advance along your career path.

5 ***Which Way Out of the Desert: Progress is made with just one step.*** Take one tiny step forward. Take another. How about one more? Before long you'll discover you're a long way from where you started. When it comes to making changes the important thing is to just start. Risk-taking and moving into discomfort will move you away from a limiting view of the world and toward a broader, more enriching one. The goal is to overcome unconscious acts of exclusion and build more effective relationships.

Did you notice the key theme threaded throughout each of these concepts? Relationships … how you choose to live, play, and work with others.

You can develop and build upon your relationships in a diverse environment by applying the five simple concepts outlined above. While the five concepts are simple, the application of them to your own life will take some effort. To make this easier, each concept is supported with illustrations, quotes, and a chapter summary that includes suggestions for immediate action that you can take. You will be asked to observe, reflect, listen, make choices, lean into discomfort, and openly communicate over and over again, with slightly different purposes depending on the chapter content. Begin with the ones that feel most comfortable or make the most sense to you. The objective is to simply begin navigating through the world with more awareness and a broader perspective.

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Why Is Navigating Through a Diverse World So Important?

The short answer is: because the world is changing, including your little corner of it.

With the fast-paced changes facing each of us, the corporate sector, and the world, diversity and globalization issues are even more crucial to the success and survival of individuals, families, and businesses. Shifting expectations, differences impacting our day-to-day lives, and our shrinking world, all provide daunting challenges to us personally. Changing demographics, global competition, worker productivity, market niche focus, and employee recruitment and retention, all provide daunting challenges to organizations.

The good news is that these challenges also provide unique opportunities to the proactive, strategic-minded, diversity-aware individual and organization. These personal and professional advantages can — and should — be yours.

What Makes Us Diverse?

Our culture … the various subcultures to which we belong. To function effectively, we must understand culture and its impact on us. Our challenge is to learn about difference, appreciate that it brings uniqueness, and work effectively with those differences in creating a win/win outcome. Managing diversity is a critical component for building effective relationships with others.

You can choose to view the process of learning about others and their differences as being either overwhelming or exciting. The rewards will be far greater when viewing it with excitement and anticipation. By developing an understanding of others, your personal gains include:

- Freedom to express your opinions and thoughts in a safe environment
- An increase in your contributions and value to self and others
- Reduced stress associated with marginalization (being excluded)

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- A heightened sense of belonging
- A much fuller and richer picture of the world — as though you're using a new set of eyes and ears
- The creation of long-standing, trusting relationships
- Improved ability to bring your talents and skills — your full self — to life.

Benefits of addressing diversity and change issues for the organization include:

- Reducing costs associated with marginalization of employees and lower productivity
- Creating a competitive market presence in the global arena
- Attracting and retaining the best employees
- Gaining a marketing advantage through enhanced customer service, product development, and innovation
- Increasing employee productivity, creativity, quality, and teamwork
- Fostering an organizational climate that honors each individual's contribution
- Enhancing public image.

Diversity work is change work. Yet it doesn't have to be difficult work; it can be exhilarating, enlightening, and ever-evolving as you begin to experience the powerful advantages of honoring diversity in your life. Honoring others occurs when you internalize the lessons and find *personal value* in a diverse environment.

The information presented in this book is not intended to be a complete or all-encompassing answer to the complexities of diversity education. Instead, it is direct information and action steps that will take you on an adventurous journey out of the desolate, mirage-ridden desert of misperception that the dear ostrich calls home.

You have the power to broaden your own perception and define expectations based on facts, not fiction. All you need to do is steady your stance, firmly plant your feet on the ground, and gently *pull*, *Pull*, *PULL* your head out of the sand.

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Accolades for *Reversing the Ostrich Approach to Diversity: Pulling your head out of the sand:*

> "Our law firm works with a diverse group of clients, vendors and independent contractors. For our business to grow and profit, it is essential to build and maintain strong, mutually respectful relationships. This book is a quick study course to help accomplish that goal. Every small business owner will experience bottom-line benefits from using the information in this book."
>
> **Kevin A. Hofstad, Esq.**
> Ledin & Hofstad, LTD, Attorneys at Law

> The manufacturing industry serves an ever-widening global market, both in terms of customers and partnerships. Reversing the Ostrich Approach to Diversity: Pulling your head out of the sand is a refreshing, welcomed resource for small companies like ours that need practical — and applicable — diversity communications learning.
>
> **Maureen Steinwall**
> Owner/President, Steinwall Inc.

> "Diversity and Globalization are the 700-pound gorillas in our lobbies — Dr. Amy Tolbert invites them in for a chat. Clear, concise and practical. Written with sensitivity and humor."
>
> **Bob Voyles**
> Robert Voyles Consulting, Performance Improvement Solutions

Don't think diversity issues apply to your business? Think again!

Whether you are a one-person business or have hundreds of employees, you work with, buy from, sell to, or provide services for, a diverse group of people.

So what are some of those bottom-line benefits?

- Rising profits from creating a competitive market presence, whether you serve a local area, compete on a global scale – or both.
- Greater customer loyalty and repeat business through enhanced customer service, product/service development, and innovation.
- Reduced costs associated with employee turnover by being able to attract – and retain – the best employees.
- Increased employee productivity.
- Enhanced public image.

At just $11.95, *Reversing the Ostrich Approach to Diversity: Pulling your head out of the sand* could provide the best ROI you'll have this year! To order:

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