



ASK THE EXPERTS

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PERSONAL BRANDING

How can I authentically celebrate my individuality and uniqueness at work while still adhering to professional business norms and expectations?

Companies love unique people with fresh ideas. But how can you stand out while still fitting in? It's all about balance.

- Step 1: Know What Makes You Awesome:** What makes you, you? Are you a problem-solving whiz? A details dynamo? Figure out your strengths and interests. [Online career assessments](#) or career counselors can help.
- Step 2: Speak Up, Don't be Shy:** Share your ideas in meetings in a professional manner. Listen to others and work together to find the best solutions. Kindness is essential to being authentic to yourself. [Learn more](#) about how to present yourself as a genuine yet respectful professional. The Career Experts Group's YouTube [Civility Series](#) is an insightful resource to help you consider norms for expressing yourself in a respectful way.
- Step 3: Actions Speak Louder Than Words:** Volunteer for projects that showcase your skills and expertise. Be the one to tackle that complex report or present findings expertly. Show your dedication and what you can do to help your team achieve their performance goals.
- Step 4: Dress to Impress:** Find ways to look professional while showing your unique style. When preparing for an interview, it's essential to consider the company's culture and industry norms – especially regarding body piercings and tattoos. If you're unsure about their policies, a good approach is to adopt a conservative appearance and remove or conceal visible piercings and tattoos. However, if you know the company embraces a more relaxed or creative atmosphere, showcasing your authentic self, including your body art, can be advantageous. Research the company's culture in advance to make an informed decision that aligns with their expectations and your personal comfort.
- Step 5:** Join [Business Resource Groups](#) (also called Employee Resource Groups) if your company sponsors them. Connect with colleagues who share your interests or inspire you. Talk, share ideas, and build genuine connections. These relationships can open doors to new opportunities!
- Step 6:** Want to feel even more comfortable being you? Help others feel that way! Speak up against unfairness and celebrate everyone's unique strengths. Consider becoming an ally, a person who has your colleague's back. When you provide [allyship in the workplace](#), you are using your personal privilege to support colleagues from marginalized groups.

It's a Work in Progress

Advice from [Brené Brown](#) inspires us to move forward with our uniqueness in the workplace. She believes authenticity should be a daily practice. "Authenticity is a collection of choices that we have to make every day. It's about the choice to show up and be real, the choice to be honest, the choice to let our true selves be seen."

By embracing vulnerability and bringing our authentic selves to work, employees and leaders can create meaningful connections and cultivate a sense of belonging within the organization. Finding the perfect balance takes time. Don't worry if you stumble sometimes. Just keep learning, growing, and being your awesome self.

Resources

- [Career Success: Finding Your Path and Navigating Obstacles](#), Career Experts Group Newsletter, May 2023
- [DEI Interview & Spotlight, Vivian Ayuso](#), Career Experts Group Newsletter, June 2022
- [13 Best Career Tests, Assessments, and Quizzes](#), The Muse, March 2023
- [Professionalism: Authenticity and Business Etiquette](#), Azure Magazine, May 23, 2024.
- [Nurturing Your Unique Style and Individualistic Freedom at Work](#), LinkedIn, 2023.
- [Employee Belonging: Why Celebrating Individuality is the Recipe for Business Success](#), Forbes, June 2023
- [Brené Brown](#) Advice- How to be Yourself, Oprah.com, August 2014

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