

Some of us feel the need to diminish—or outright hide—elements of our identities for fear they might lead to our marginalization at work. This includes those with marginalized identities whose elements aren't concealable (e.g., visibly belonging to a marginalized racial background) and can manifest in various ways, from changing the way one dresses to choosing to distance oneself from others who share the elements of the identity they seek to hide. In their study for Deloitte University, *Uncovering Talent: A New Model of Inclusion*, Kenji Yoshino and Christie Smith define this phenomenon as “covering.”

Before I started my consulting firm, the concept of being open at work was one I feared couldn't become a reality. So, for a while, I covered by neglecting to mention my partner, Michelle. But that wasn't sustainable, and soon enough, I confronted my boss with a photo of Michelle, explaining that my boss needed to know who she was and why she was important to me. My boss was caught off-guard, but she was open, and I was so, so relieved.

At my firm, we work with organizations to recommend and facilitate affinity groups that identify internal issues in a culturally competent and respectful manner. Our goal is to help organizations create workplaces where all employees feel listened to and valued and—critically—that the burdens associated with covering are not theirs to bear.