Ebook

Putting Ideals into Action:

A 7-Step Guide to Launching a Successful D&I Project





How Blinkist put its ideals into action by launching D&I projects that have made a real impact. Their Head of Culture and Community, Mertcan Uzun, guides you through their playbook.

Introduction

The case for diversity and inclusion in the workplace is stronger than ever. Research shows that diverse companies report higher employee engagement, are more innovative, and even perform better financially. Over two-thirds of executives rate diversity and inclusion as an important issue, and 80% of employees report that they prefer inclusive companies. That said, many organizations are lagging painfully behind. Just 8% of fortune 500 CEOs are women and fewer than that are Black. According to a recent Gallup Poll, 45% of workers report experiencing harassment or discrimination in the workplace last year.

Why the discrepancy between intention and outcome?
While many see the value and ethical importance of D&I, actually implementing a project that makes an impact is another story.

Blinkist is familiar with these challenges. While Blinkist regards itself as a modern company at the forefront of its industry, when its Head of Culture and Community Mertcan Uzun took an honest look at the company structure it became clear that there was a lot of work to do.

For example, when Mertcan first took on this project in 2019, the entire leadership team consisted of white, cisgendered men. Additionally, there was huge demand for better DEc&I at the grassroots level of the company. A lot of employees were very vocal at all company meetings, asking tough questions where answers weren't always possible—so the leadership team knew they needed to act.

While a D&I project is never complete, Blinkist has made some serious headway since then. For example, their current leadership team consists of 40% women, and in the most recent D&I survey in 2022, employees reported an 83% belonging score. How did they do it?

Mertcan is largely to thank for pulling off this feat. They created a 7-step action plan that has yielded real results. The best part is that these can scale to any organization and easily be tailored to the given D&I needs of your company. This ebook contains steps, key learnings, and tips for adapting this framework to your business.

"At the end of the day, this is not merely a business project, but an ethical imperative!

And, as it's likely to be one of the most important, difficult and 'human' projects your company will ever face, you have to be very careful how you approach it."



Mertcan Uzun
Head of Culture and Community

7 Key Steps: An Overview

- Step 1 Get Buy-in From Leadership
- **Step 2** Hire an External Consultant
- Step 5 Create Awareness, Build Trust, and Identify the Issues
- **Step 4** Formally Collect Quantitative and Qualitative Data
- **Step 5** Interpret the Data and Identify Action Points
- **Step 6** Educate, Educate, Educate!
- **Step 7** Embed D&I Into the Culture and Let Go



Step 1: Get Buy-in From Leadership

They shape the culture at your company, and employees look to them to set the tone about what's important in the workplace. Leadership also has the power to sponsor and allocate resources to your project. Without their support, it will be difficult to get your initiative off the ground.

How leadership feels about your D&I project will have the biggest impact in shaping how the rest of your organization perceives it.

To get them on board, be prepared to pitch your D&I project by demonstrating why it's needed at your company. Showing case studies and presenting convincing data is essential. For example, a recent McKinsey report found that diverse companies are more profitable and perform better than their competitors. It concludes that to achieve better D&I outcomes, companies must implement systematic and business-led initiatives.

Keep in mind that part of getting management to back your project means meeting you halfway by doing their own homework. Being that the vast majority of executives are white, cis-gendered men, leadership also needs to recognize their privilege and make the effort to educate themselves upon being presented with this information.



Mertcan's Top Advice:

- Be prepared to have tough conversations with your leadership team that will likely make them feel uncomfortable
- Get senior and influential people in the business who are willing to go in and bat for you, in your corner as early as possible

Data to share with your leadership team

While this is a human issue—and not about the bottom line—the McKinsey analysis proved there's a very strong business case for paying attention to D&I and taking action!

In their 2019 study, they found:

- Companies in the top quartile for gender diversity on executive teams were 25% more likely to have aboveaverage profitability than companies in the fourth quartile
- Companies with more than 30% women executives were more likely to outperform companies with a smaller percentage
- In the case of ethnic and cultural diversity, top quartile companies were 36% more profitable than those in the fourth quartile

It's also important to share your own internal data to highlight the issue. Some things you might like to call out:

- Gender split in specific teams: you might have a team that is 50% women and 50% men, but how are they allocated in specific teams? Are the men occupying engineering roles, while women are in enabling teams like people and culture, or creative roles?
- Gender pay gaps: how does it vary across all levels?
- Nationalities: how many of your employees are from different parts of the world?
- Age ranges: does your organization have a bias towards young or old people?



Step 2: Hire an External Consultant

Once you've got leadership's support, it's time to delegate the tasks associated with launching your D&I initiative.

Oftentimes, these projects are tacked on to existing HR and management roles. Needless to say, these people are already busy. The result is that the D&I project becomes less of a priority, and it can slowly fall by the wayside. When it comes to the perceived seriousness of these projects, this is not a good look in the eyes of your employees.

Mertcan recommends hiring an external consultant who can make the project their main focus. A professional who specializes in cultivating diversity, equity, and inclusion in the workplace will be able to draw on a wealth of experiences working with companies on similar initiatives. Plus, an outside perspective can provide a clearer and more honest vision on these more sensitive topics. Their expertise will help guide your decisions about the appropriate course of action.

"Hiring an external consultant will give this project the perspective and priority it needs."

— Mertcan Uzun

Blinkist picks:

- Blinkist worked with Inka and Hilary from <u>Strengths</u>
 <u>Circle.</u>
- Since launching this project, Mertcan is also now available as a consultant to pass on their expert advice based on experience:

Email: mertcan.uzun88@gmail.com

LinkedIn: www.linkedin.com/in/mertcan-uzun/



Step 3: Create Awareness, Build Trust, and Identify the Issues

Now that you've laid the groundwork by getting leadership on board and finding consultants with the right expertise, it's time to get connected with your employees. It's their everyday experiences that will ultimately guide this project and inform you on the size of the issues and where to focus your energies. It's your job to provide the space for them to share what they wish to see improve in the organization.

It's essential that you give a platform to the marginalized voices at your company. Setting up a solid comms strategy is key.

This step is fundamentally all about creating awareness so people know the project is happening, building trust so people are comfortable opening up, and in the findings of the project.

Appoint a well-respected employee to act as a liaison to your project team through which these conversations can be funneled. This will better facilitate dialogue with your employees. Start by having informal, offline "coffee chats" with as many people as possible, especially those from marginalized groups; and be sure to explain what you're doing, why you're doing it, and what your background is. The things you find out in the more informal "fact-finding" stage will inform the questions you need to ask in the more formal data collection phase.

Lastly, ensure that you nurture an atmosphere where underrepresented groups at your company feel heard and included. Their perspectives matter most in shaping your D&I project. The goal is to lift the burden off of them by creating actionables for more privileged members of your organization.



An overview of Blinkist's comms strategy

Taking the temperature of the organization means talking to people, and asking them about their experiences in the workplace with a specific focus on how this links to their identities. For example, "How do I experience the workplace as a woman, or as a Black parent?". Blinkist's comms strategy was defined by 3 words: honest, transparent, explanatory.

Honest People know why we collect the data

Insparent People know how we're

going to use this data

Explanatory People know what we're

going to do with the data



Step 4: Collect Quantitative and Qualitative Data

Talking to people informally is a crucial step, but you'll also need concrete data that can be communicated with relevant stakeholders at your company. Therefore, you'll want to develop a systemic way to collect information from your employees. This data will also give you a benchmark for measuring the future success of your D&I projects.

Create a D&I survey—and be sure to test it out with underrepresented groups before sending it to everyone!

A D&I survey functions as a litmus test for rating the levels of diversity, inclusion, and belonging that your employees currently experience at your company. This information is crucial for identifying pain points and developing an appropriate action plan for addressing them. Enlist the help of your consultant in designing the survey. Also be sure to take into account the perspectives shared in Step 3. This should be a collaborative process.

"Make sure that you design your survey not only with your consultants but also with a group of people who come from different backgrounds and experiences. Let them shape the study with you."

Mertcan Uzun

Before you launch the survey, be prepared to communicate clearly the importance of your employees' participation. This is a good opportunity to use the support of your leadership team and have them address employees directly about why the survey is vital. The emphasis should be on improving the overall levels of diversity and inclusion through concrete action. An outcomes-oriented approach to the survey will likely improve participation.







Blinkist's approach to D&I surveys

Every 12 months, Blinkist surveys all employees on topics such as fairness, voice, decision making, inclusion, and diversity—which feed into the score on belonging and engagement.

Don't forget: Feelings are data points, too.

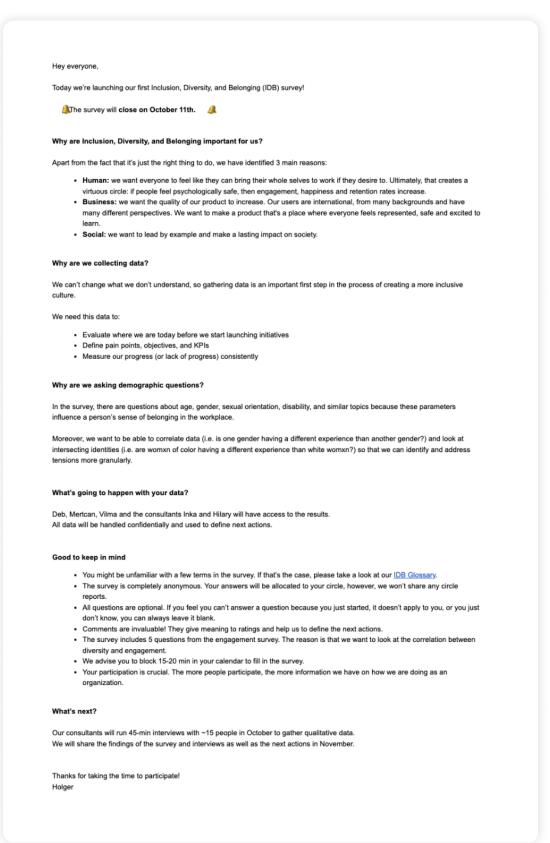
You need to ask about a range of things in your survey. What worked best for Blinkist is the following:

- A section for demographics
- A section for questions measuring inclusion, diversity, and belonging
- A section for items measuring engagement of your employees with the company and business

This setup gave a data set that enabled various analyses to be run later in the project.



Tip: Have your CEO (or an equally influential person in the organization) send out a company-wide email that explains what the survey is about, why you're doing it, and also encourages everyone to fill it out. This should have a significant impact on participation rates.



Here's the email Blinkist's CEO Holger Seim sent which you can use as a starting template.

To get the full picture, you have to conduct qualitative research as well. You'll want your underrepresented employees to feel safe being honest about their experiences, so it's best to have your external consultant spearhead this task.

Pick around 15 people from diverse backgrounds, seniority levels, and fields to participate in the interviews. If you're a really large organization, then keep talking to people until you stop hearing anything new, which will likely be no more than 50 people. Your consultant can then give you a detailed, yet sensitive, report on the discussions.

Note: The data collected in this step should always be anonymous and confidential. People often share their most honest opinions if they know their answers are respected and won't impact their standing or safety within the organization.

Step 5: Interpret the Data and Identify Action Points

Remember, small wins are big! Once you gather your data, take a pause. You've just accomplished something that many companies are struggling to achieve. You have taken the first realistic snapshot of your company, and now you know who is really in the frame.

The next step is interpreting the information in meaningful ways and taking action! To do this, you'll need to take the survey results at more than face-value.

Don't stop at mere descriptive interpretations of demographic info, and go beyond diversity metrics. Apply an intersectional analysis and look into correlations to extrapolate more valuable insights.

For example, consider how power is distributed. You might have a 50/50 split between men and women at your company, but who holds the majority of leadership and management positions? Do women at every level of the organization report the same sense of belonging?

Set up 2–3 focus areas and create a roadmap with action steps on how you can resolve specific issues. This is where you take your company away from mere optics and actually facilitate concrete change.

"At this stage, you have to give up on being kind to everyone. Being kind doesn't necessarily give underrepresented people a seat at the table—affirmative actions do."

- Mertcan Uzun

To illustrate what can come from these surveys, here are some of the action items implemented as a result of the ongoing Blinkist D&I project:

- To provide more equity and improve the experience for marginalized groups at all levels of the company, coaching budgets were introduced. The diversity of the coaching pool was also increased to ensure it includes people from different and more relatable backgrounds.
- Initiatives to improve the diversity in hiring funnels, such as recruitment events focused on marginalized communities and job portals, and employer branding to attract talent, etc.
- The survey highlighted that a lot of people were unhappy with the representation in Blinkist marketing, so workshops were conducted with marketing teams to understand the current state and desired state. As a result, a change was initiated in the marketing visuals.
- To address non-inclusive language, the "guys" bot was implemented on Slack, and a code of conduct and discrimination policy was written with the goal of shaping the way people behaved.



Step 6: Educate, Educate, Educate!

We often assume a baseline level of knowledge when it comes to diversity, equity, and inclusion. In actuality, everyone is at a different stage in their learning journey. Therefore, it's necessary to provide your employees with accessible tools for educating themselves on the necessity of D&I initiatives at your organization.

Studies show that education can effectively foster more tolerance and openness to diversity and inclusion. The caveat, however, is that the effectiveness of these outcomes hinges on the tools used. Researchers have found that learning tools that use vivid storytelling are most effective in cultivating empathy and openness to different perspectives. At the conclusion of the study, researchers recommend using integrative digital technology and mobile learning for facilitating tolerance education and diversity training.

The key is making the learning process as engaging and accessible as possible. This is an area where Blinkist really shined. To educate employees on the importance of D&I, Blinkist mobilized their own L&D product by creating self-directed learning modules.

Structured in the form of 2-week learning courses, each module contains a curated selection of Blinks, videos, and TedTalks. They were developed by members of the underrepresented groups in focus and with the goal of elevating those voices.

Blinkist employees can choose between 20- and 40- minute learning sessions, so they can easily tailor this important work to fit their schedules. Each session concludes with a call to action, whether it be donating to a trusted organization or signing a petition.

You can see some of Blinkist's learning modules in the appendix of this ebook, which you can use at your own organization too.



It's important to develop a toolkit for providing employees with targeted learning materials that will ensure that they'll do the work. The challenge is to foster widespread employee engagement without policing them.

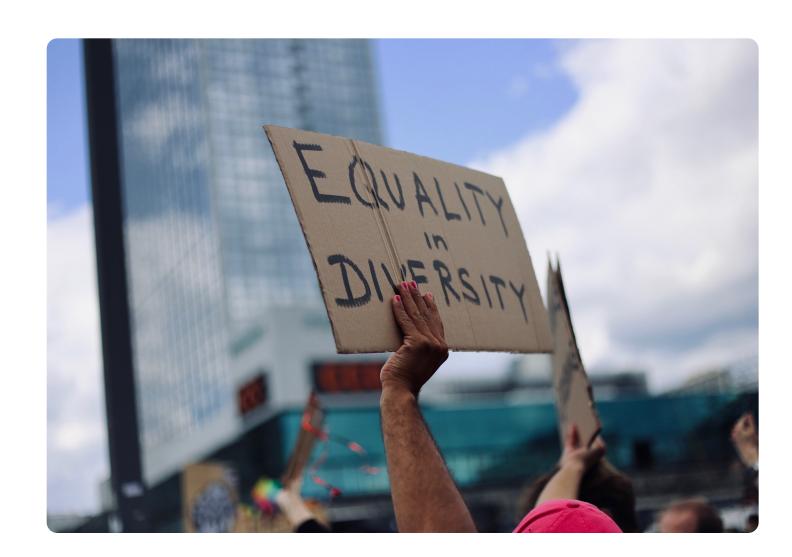


Step 7: Embed D&I Into the Culture and Let Go

The final step is to ensure that your project can continue evolving even as your business grows and changes. To do this, you'll want to hand your project over to a diverse group of people who come from different backgrounds and experiences.

Facilitate them in setting up an advisory board, and make sure that there's a system of rotation in place to maintain the diversity of this board. It should always be a collaborative project where all voices are given equal time with no one person "leading" the way. And then just let it go.

Congratulations! By this point you've successfully launched a D&I initiative with the potential to make a measurable, positive impact on the lives of your employees!



"While research shows that diversity and belonging improves company performance, we also do it because it's the right thing to do."

Mertcan Uzun



Tip: Follow Blinkist's lead and set up a Culture and Belonging Advice Committee after you've launched your D&I project

Purpose:

Facilitate the cultural transition and act as an additional voice within the organization so that everyone has an additional avenue to be speak up and be heard.

Why:

- The committee ensures that culture and belonging is lived through the organization sustainably—culture is not "done" to people but is something that is collaboratively created, nurtured and developed
- The Culture and Belonging Advice Committee should be sustained by a diverse and alternating group of people that represents a wide variety of perspectives instead of a selected few

Responsibilities:

- Share: enable 2-way communication
- Voice: enable everyone to have their say and be heard
- Impact: pave the way for impactful changes
- Empowerment: of themselves and others



Try Blinkist's Learning Modules*:

- 1. Self Education on Systemic Racism
- 2. Pride and LGBTQIA+
- 3. Anti-Asian Racism & Violence

These modules are curated and inspired from various places such as <u>blacklivesmatters.carrd.co</u>, <u>anti-asianviolenceresources.carrd.co</u>, and other activists, artists, and influential people.



"These modules elevate the perspectives of people who have actually experienced racism, discrimination, sexism, and xenophobia. They offer an access point directly to these communities.

But it's super important to note—these modules are just the starting point, and people need to prioritize doing the work themselves!"

Mertcan Uzun

How to use these modules:

For super important yet complex topics like these, it's common for people to feel overwhelmed and not know where to start.

Firstly, start with this question: how many minutes can you allocate a day to educate yourself on becoming an informed ally?

Each module spans two weeks with a **20- and 40- minutes per day option.** Simply pick the amount of time that suits your schedule.

Important to note: this is just the beginning of your self-education and it doesn't stop after 2 weeks! To continue the work, you should find related resources yourself and keep learning.



MODULE 1

Self-Education on Systemic Racism

This module focuses on educating yourself on systemic racism and injustices.

Right now, people all over the world are being confronted with the results of systemic racism in society. Understanding experiences that aren't our own, through the voices of those who've lived them is part of doing the work.

It's essential that we educate ourselves and put an end to the continued inequality that exists all around us, whether we experience it personally or not.

The resources here are collected from various places such as <u>blacklivesmatter.carrd.co</u>, Instagram pages of black activists, and Blinkist.

Suggested schedule for each module:

1st week 20 minutes per day

Monday	Watch	Systemic Racism Explained	0
Tuesday	Watch	How Studying Privilege Systems Can Strengthen Compassion	0
Wednesday	Read	Who Gets to Be Afraid in America?	<u> </u>
Thursday	Listen	Your Body Being Used Podcast	
Friday	Read	White Privilege: Unpacking the Invisible Knapsack	<u>A-</u>
Saturday	Watch	Let's get to the root of racial injustice	0
Sunday	Listen	When Civility Is Used As A Cudgel Against People Of Color	

2nd week 20 minutes per day

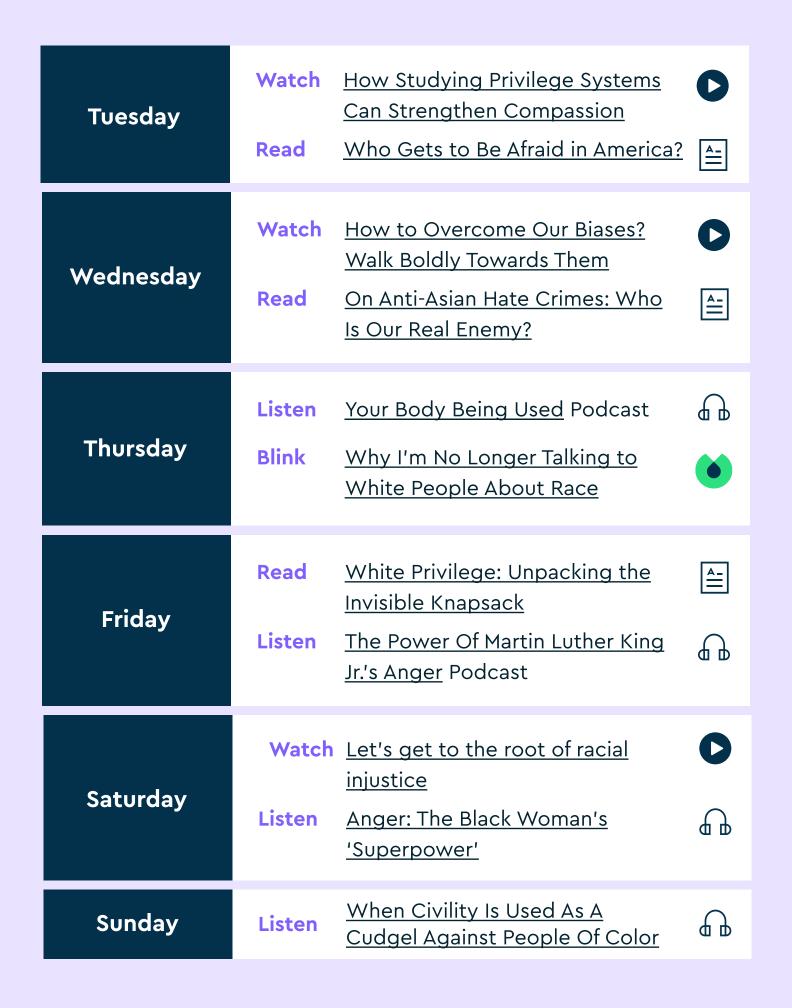
Monday	Blink	Why I'm No Longer Talking to White People About Race	•
Tuesday	Watch	How to Overcome Our Biases? Walk Boldly Towards Them	0
Wednesday	Listen	The Power Of Martin Luther King Jr.'s Anger Podcast	
Thursday	Watch	How We're Priming Some Kids for College and others for prison	0
Friday	Blink	From #BlackLivesMatter to Black Liberation	•
Saturday	Blink	When They Call You a Terrorist	•
Sunday	Do research and then sign a <u>petition</u> and donate if you can		

1st week 40 minutes per day

Monday Watch Systemic Racism Explained Blink From #BlackLivesMatter to Black Liberation	D
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APPENDIX | LEARNING MODULES



2nd week 40 minutes per day 0 Monday Watch 1st half of 13th by Ava DuVernay Tuesday Watch 2nd half of <u>13th</u> by Ava DuVernay Blink Me and White Supremacy Wednesday <u>_</u> The Intersectionality Wars Read This episode of Code Switch Listen Podcast Thursday Between the World and Me Friday The Limits Of Empathy Podcast Saturday How to be an Antiracist Do research and then sign a <u>petition</u> and Sunday donate if you can, train yourself

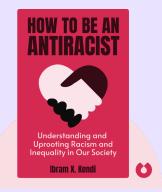
Ready to continue your self-education? Here's a list resources you can use:

- Antiracist Allyship Starter Pack
- 20 Blinks to Understand Racism
- Resources for Accountability and Actions for Black
 Lives
- blacklivesmatters.carrd.co
- www.blacklivesmatterberlin.de
- Black History Month Library
- AntiRacism Resources
- Anti Racism Resource List

Blinkist titles in this learning module















MODULE 2

Self-Education on Pride and LGBTQIA+

This module focuses on educating yourself on pride and LGBTQIA+ experience.

LGBTQ Pride Month is commemorated each year in the month of June, in some countries in July, to honor the 1969 Stonewall riots in New York City.

In June of 1969, patrons and supporters of the Stonewall Inn staged an uprising to resist the police harassment and persecution to which LGBTQ Americans were commonly subjected. This uprising marked the beginning of a Gay Rights movement to outlaw discriminatory laws and practices against LGBTQ people.

The resources here are collected from various places such as magazine articles, Instagram pages of LGBTQIA+ activists, and Blinkist.

Suggested schedule for each module:

1st week 20 minutes per day

Monday	Watch	A living history of the LGBT movement since the 1800s	0
Tuesday	Watch	The Myth of the Gay Agenda	0
Wednesday	Read	The Black Lives Matter Movement Must Include Trans People	<u>_</u>
Thursday	Listen	From Stonewall to the Present, Fifty Years of L.G.B.T.Q . Rights	
Friday	Blink	She/He/They/Me	•
Saturday	Watch	The Fifty Shades of Gay	0
Sunday	Watch	The Stonewall You Know Is a Myth. And That's O.K.	0

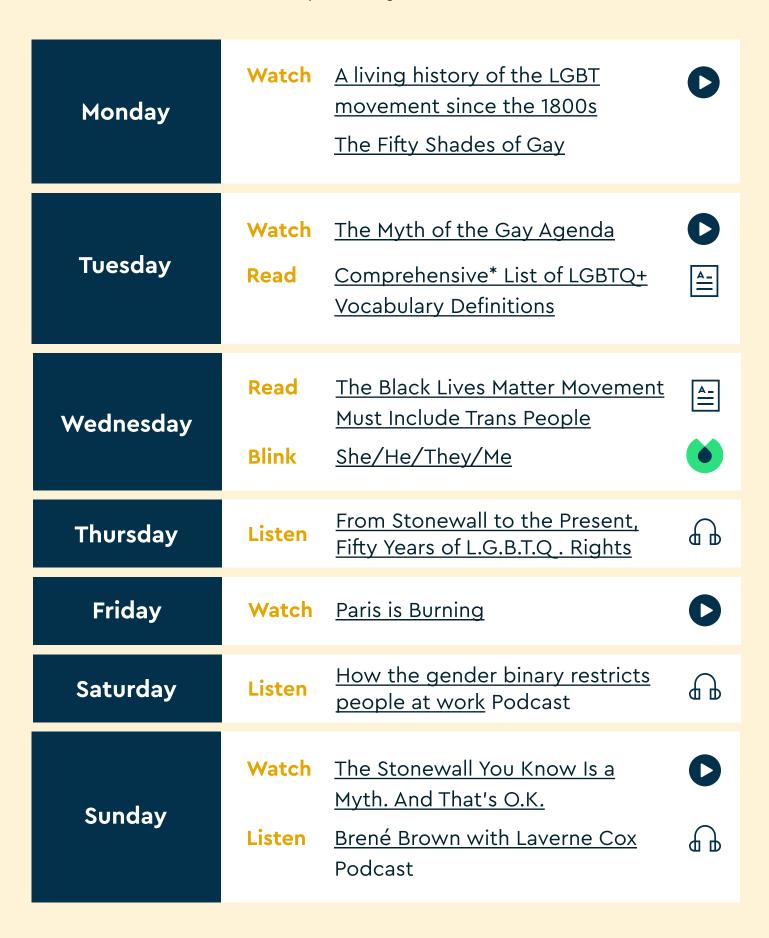
2nd week 20 minutes per day

Monday	Blink	<u>American Savage</u>	•
Tuesday	Watch	Stonewall Forever	0
Wednesday	Watch	<u>How to Become an Inclusive</u> <u>Leader</u>	0
Thursday	Watch	What the Gay Rights Movements Learned from the Civil Right Movem	nents
Friday	Blink	Boy Erased	•
Saturday	Blink	The Invisible Orientation	•
Sunday	Do the I	research and then <u>donate</u> if you can	



APPENDIX | LEARNING MODULES

1st week 40 minutes per day



2nd week 40 minutes per day

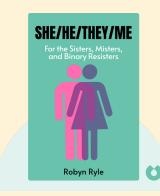
Monday	Watch	Part 1 of <u>Disclosure</u>
Tuesday	Watch	Part 2 of <u>Disclosure</u>
Wednesday	Blink Read	American Savage The Intersectionality Wars
Thursday	Watch	Stonewall Forever
Friday	Watch Blink	What the Gay Rights Movements Learned from the Civil Right Movements The Invisible Orientation
Saturday	Blink Watch	Boy Erased How to Become an Inclusive Leader
Sunday	Do the	research and then <u>donate</u> if you can 🧷

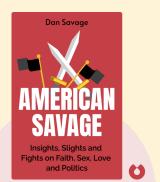
Ready to continue your self-education? Here's a list

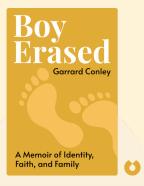
resources you can use:

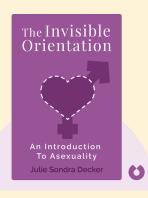
- 11 Books on the LGBTQIA+ Experience
- TransWhat?
- LGBTQ Inclusive Language
- GLAAD
- Ted Talks: LGBT
- Revel & Riot
- ADL.org
- Out and Equal
- ILGA World

Blinkist titles in this learning module











MODULE 3

Self Education on Anti-Asian Racism & Violence

This module focuses on educating yourself on systemic racism and injustices, especially those that target the Asian community.

Anti-Asian racism and violent attacks on Asian and the Asian elderly have only increased in recent months. Since COVID-19 became news in the United States, hate speech and violence against the AAPI community has run rampant.

In February 2021, attacks—particularly on elderly Asian Americans, have spiked. Unfortunately, many of these incidents are not being reported and are invisible to major media outlets.*

Suggested schedule for each module:

1st week 20 minutes per day

Monday	Watch	1st part of <u>The Racism Virus</u>	0
Tuesday	Watch	2nd part of <u>The Racism Virus</u>	0
Wednesday	Read	America's long history of scapegoating its Asian citizens	<u>A-</u>
Thursday	Listen	Your Body Being Used Podcast	
Friday	Read	White Privilege: Unpacking the Invisible Knapsack	<u>A-</u>
Saturday	Watch	Let's get to the root of racial injustice	0
Sunday	Listen	When Civility Is Used As A Cudgel Against People Of Color	

2nd week 20 minutes per day

Monday	Blink	Why I'm No Longer Talking to White People About Race	•
Tuesday	Watch	How to Overcome Our Biases? Walk Boldly Towards Them	0
Wednesday	Read	Covid fueled anti-Asian racism	<u>_</u>
Thursday	Read	How Racism and Sexism Intertwine to Torment Asian-American Wome	_ <u>```</u>
Friday	Watch	America's Anti-Asian Pandemic	0
Saturday	Read	'Model Minority' Myth	<u>_</u>
Sunday		arch and then sign a <u>petition</u> and if you can, <u>train</u> yourself	ALTO

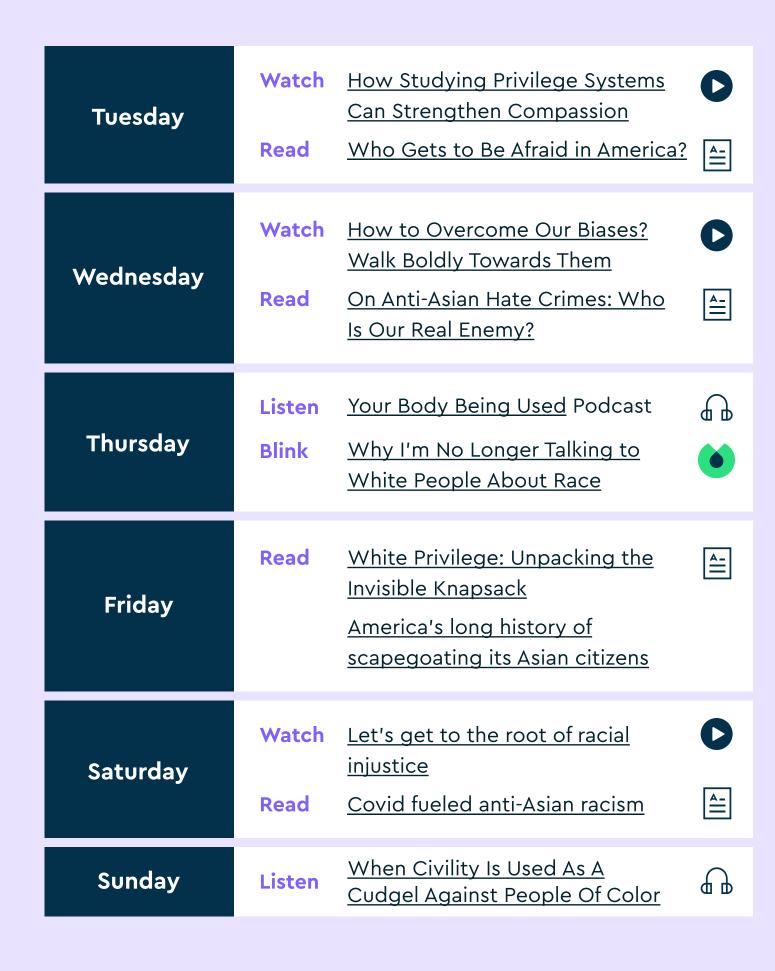
1st week 40 minutes per day

Monday Watch 1st part of <u>The Racism Virus</u> 2nd part of <u>The Racism Virus</u>	
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*Source: <u>anti-asianviolenceresources.carrd.co</u>



APPENDIX | LEARNING MODULES



2nd week 40 minutes per day

Monday	Read	How Racism and Sexism Intertwine to Torment Asian-American Women	1 1
Tuesday	Watch	America's Anti-Asian Pandemic	0
Wednesday	Blink Read	Me and White Supremacy The Intersectionality Wars	<u></u>
Thursday	Watch	Asian American communities stand up amid string of violent attacks	0
Friday	Read	How to be an ally to the community	<u>_</u>
Saturday	Blink Read	How to be an Antiracist 'Model Minority' Myth	
Sunday		earch and then sign a <u>petition</u> and if you can, <u>train</u> yourself	

Ready to continue your self-education? Here's a list resources you can use:

- Anti-Asian Violence Resources
- AntiRacism Resources
- Anti Racism Resource List

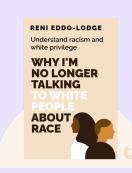
Follow these API community leaders and activists for more resources and education

- Michelle Kim, activist, and co-founder of Awaken
- Amanda Nguyễn, activist and founder of risenow.us
- <u>Dr. Kiona</u>, activist
- <u>Daniel Wu</u>, actor and activist
- <u>Hasan Minhai</u>, comedian, actor, political commentator, and television host

Blinkist titles in this learning module









OBlinkist

Thank you

Want to learn more about how Blinkist can help you with D&I initiatives at your organization?

Book a demo now

