



Words Matter: Equality vs. Equity



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In today's ever-changing social landscape, everyday language cannot be underestimated. There is a long list of words that are easily interchanged and seemingly synonymous—cause and compel; less and fewer; among and between, just to name a few.

Let's pause and explore two seemingly similar words—**equality** and **equity**. As we continue our [focus on Belonging](#), understanding the contrast between these terms is crucial, as there are far-reaching implications.



The test of our progress is not whether we add more to the abundance of those who have much; it is whether we provide enough for those who have too little."

Franklin D. Roosevelt



Defining equality and equity

As you consume this content, remember the core objective is to understand and appreciate the language being used when we discuss Belonging at RP.

Equality and equity, much like systemic and systematic, can be related conceptually, but cannot be used interchangeably. Equality is about treating everyone the same, providing identical resources and treatment to all. On the other hand, equity involves distributing resources based on individual circumstances and needs.



Equality



Equity

The above illustration provides a clear picture of the real impact when we believe that equality solves issues related to Belonging.

In the above equality image, each person receives the same resource. Though treated equally via the distribution of identical resources, the glaring shortfall is that no consideration was given to the actual needs of each person. The tallest person does not need assistance to achieve the same line of sight as the others, while the shortest person could benefit from even greater assistance. With the boxes redistributed equitably, all three people have the same opportunity to see at the same level.

Equality and equity within teams

As humans we all have a natural desire to be treated “fairly.” When we perceive unequal treatment, injustice or unfairness, our brains are hardwired to trigger a range of emotions or cognitive responses (disappointment, frustration, resentment, release of stress hormones, etc.). Improving conditions and the environment within a leader’s sphere of influence can be just as important as solving larger issues that hamper in earnest Belonging efforts.



Within teams, leaders at every level set the right tone, and act with purpose and intention to foster a culture where each person feels seen, heard and treated with dignity and respect. To achieve this, leaders may:

- Broaden their network beyond existing relationships and assess the needs of all individuals and the team.
- Ensure all teammates have the same information, tools, and opportunities for career advancement.
- Assess the experience and exposure of each teammate. For example, if someone is a first-generation college graduate, they may need more guidance to navigate a successful career path.

In time, we believe RP’s dedicated Belonging efforts will produce tangible positive outcomes for the practice and while we aren’t aiming to influence every heart and mind, we can participate in fluid dialogue that allows us to hear one another. Remember the power of words, and together, let’s

cultivate an environment where equality and equity thrive, and every voice is not only heard, but genuinely valued.

Interested in RP Belonging initiatives? [Learn more here](#).

Tara McKennie ([LinkedIn](#)) is the Vice President of Culture and Leadership Development at [Radiology Partners](#). RP, through its owned and affiliated practices, is a leading physician-led and physician-owned radiology practice in the U.S. Learn more about our mission, values and practice principles at [RadPartners.com](#). For the latest news from RP, follow along our [blog](#) and on [Twitter](#), [LinkedIn](#), [Instagram](#) and [YouTube](#). Interested in learning about career opportunities? [Visit our careers page](#).