How to handle being the only one in the room

Lean In Circle Discussion Guide for Latinas
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Meeting agenda
approx 90 mins

Member updates
15 mins

Watch video
8 mins

Icebreaker
10 mins

Activities

- Activity 1: Describe the Only experience
  15 mins
- Activity 2: Affirm your accomplishments
  20 mins
- Activity 3: Identify your network
  15 mins

One Action
3 mins

For Circles with only 60 mins, here are suggestions to shorten this agenda:

- Encourage members to watch the video in advance
- Spend 5 mins on member updates
- Skip the icebreaker
Getting started

**Member updates**

| 2 mins or less per member | 15-20 mins depending on group size |

Go around your Circle and share personal updates. As a general rule, personal updates should be brief and focus on big changes and important decisions in your life. (It’s OK not to have one every month!) If you have a One Action update, share that with your Circle.

**Watch video** 8 mins

**Icebreaker** 10 mins

Being the only Latina in a room can be an especially difficult experience. Take a few minutes to think about the following questions. Then, go around the room and share your answers (1 minute each).

- How does it feel when you’re not the only person of your identity at your workplace?
- What would your ideal workplace look like?
As we’ve just heard, Onlys are more likely to have challenging experiences at work. For “double Onlys”—for example, for someone who is the only Latinx person and the only woman in the room—the experience can be even worse. In the following activity, the moderator will read a list of experiences that are common when you’re the only Latina in the room at work. Each time you hear something that you’ve experienced, raise your hand:

- You felt under pressure to perform
- You felt on guard
- You felt left out
- You felt closely watched
- You felt that your actions would reflect on people like you
- You experienced microaggressions, such as having your competence questioned or being mistaken for someone more junior

Have everyone share a brief reflection on their experience (1 minute or less per person).
Activity 2: Affirm your accomplishments

20 mins

Taking care of yourself on challenging days is crucial. One way to do this is to create a folder highlighting your accomplishments, both big and small. Your folder may include examples of your best work, positive feedback from your colleagues, or even your own reflections on your achievements.

Take the next 15 minutes to reflect on your accomplishments at work and document them in your achievements folder. You can use any format that works for you, such as a PDF document, the Notes app on your phone, or even a physical notebook. The goal is to create an accessible document that you can refer to on challenging days to remind yourself of your capabilities and successes!

To get yourself started, follow the prompts below and write down:

- The biggest challenges you’ve faced and overcome at work
- Your educational attainments, languages, technical skills, and professional expertise that you worked hard to acquire
- Times when you negotiated for something and received it
- The biggest projects you’ve finished at work over your career
- Any positive feedback you’ve received in the past year

Then, go around the Circle and have each person share one item from their list that they’re proud of (up to 1 minute per person). Applaud each person for their achievement.
Activity 3: Identify your network 15 mins

As we heard in today’s video, talking with another person of your identity about the challenges you both experience at work can be helpful and cathartic. Take 5 minutes to brainstorm a list of people you know who share your identity as a Latina and work in your field. These people can be friends, family members, someone in your network, or even members of your Lean In Circle. They can be more junior, more senior, or at the same level as you. You can also add organizations for people of your identity in your field or in the workplace more broadly to this list.

Then, go around the Circle and have each person share what they are looking for in a connection and who they have on their list. After each person shares, leave space for the group to offer suggestions on additional people or organizations to reach out to.

“When I started to get into managerial positions, I felt like I had this pressure, like ‘Oh, okay. Wait a minute. I’m the Latina in the room. I have to perform in a way that gives folks confidence that people like me can be here in the first place.’ So yay, I got the job, but now I felt like I had a whole other piece of work to prove that yes, you can have Latinas leading organizations or making important decisions. Fortunately, there’s been subsequent Latina executive directors in my organization, but we need to get to a place where we can’t count them on one hand.”

Anna Dapelo-Garcia, executive, healthcare industry, Lean In Network Leader, California, USA (she/her)
This week, take a few minutes to identify one person from Activity 3 to reach out to.

- Circle or highlight their name on your list.
- Commit to reaching out to them to set up a one-on-one coffee chat, lunch date, or other activity where you can talk about your experiences at work.

Congratulations on a great meeting!