

## What Does Workplace Inclusion Mean for People Without Children?

**VoiceAmerica** 00:04

Welcome to New legacy radio with Christine Erickson. Are you someone who doesn't have children by circumstance, choice or chance? This show is for our collective community. Are you someone who influences policy, DEI initiatives or media narratives? Learn how you can co-create inclusive equitable policies and environments for people without children. Now, here's your host, Christine Erickson.

**Christine Erickson** 00:31

Welcome to New Legacy Radio. I'm Christine Erickson. And I appreciate you all being with us today. I'm the founder of New Legacy Institute, which works to achieve social inclusion and polity... policy equity for people without children. Today, we're going to focus on the inclusion of people without children in the workplace. We're honored to be joined by Dr. Erin Conner, co founder and vice president of Inclusion Design Group, recognized as a leading DEI firm. Thank you for being with us today, Erin. And, as you know, this is a very welcome conversation for our community. So we appreciate the insights and the conversation we're going to have today.

**Dr. Erin Conner** 01:11

Thank you so much for having me, Christine. I feel really honored and grateful to be a part of the conversation.

**Christine Erickson** 01:17

Thank you. We're grateful that you're here. So, where do we begin with this? Right? We're talking about something that kind of needs to be brought out of the shadows of the workplace. Yeah. And so why does this matter? How do we approach this? What does it mean for people without children? And what is the impact of not being included not having equitable policies? These are some of the things that we're going to touch on. And I'd like to start with, why is that? What's our why for being here? What's your why for the work that you do? And how does this impact you?

**Dr. Erin Conner 01:56**

Honestly, I think the bottom line, why is the same why we have for so many inclusive policies and practices that we really encourage all of us to engage in. And it's that people matter. And that people's lives matter. And people's time matters. And, and really trying to, ...to value that working towards policies, and working towards a workplace culture that honors that is, is sometimes a difficult thing. It can be, kind of hard to figure out how to do it correctly. It can be, you know, a challenge to talk through all of the different issues. No one's here to say that it's easy. But I would personally say it's worth it. It's worth the time, and the investment, and the effort that we put into trying to figure out solutions that really reflect that we do honor people, that we do honor their time, that we can value their lives and the things that they do--not just inside of work, but outside of work. And so I think as we think about, you know, people who are without children, and the needs that they have, and the bias that they face, and the impact that this has on their lives... Really starting from that fundamental place of valuing every single person within your organization is a great place to start. I know for me personally this conversation has meant a lot. You know, I am also a person without a child and, it's been a complicated road for me in that. There was a time in my life where I really wanted to have a child, and I was engaged in fertility treatments with my partner, and it was, you know, a really difficult, emotional moment for me. And what I didn't feel at that time was the support that one would hope to feel from a workplace environment, from governmental policies, from health care policies. I was really on my own. No, I didn't have the opportunity to work with my personal doctor, because infertility treatments at that time were outside of my range. So I participated in an experimental trial in an effort to be... to be able to get pregnant. And, it was very impersonal. I felt like I was part of a trial. You know, when... When the result was that I wasn't pregnant at the end of months and months of this process, I didn't even get a phone call to say, Hey, we're really sorry about what happened here. You know, I called them and said, You know, this... It didn't work, and, you know, this is, this is the result that I found. And they didn't even call me back. You know, it just felt very impersonal. And, I know that... You know, when we're at work, it's a professional environment. And I'm not suggesting that women need to talk about their fertility journey with their, with their colleagues--by any stretch of the imagination. What I'm saying is that, it's important that we think about individuals, and the path they are on, that we value. What it is that they're going

through inside of the office space, and outside the office space. And the reason why this really matters at work is because so many employers provide health care insurance. So many employers think, "What do I want to include in these packages, what's important?" And health care providers are deciding what's important, what's valuable here. And so I just want to encourage folks to consider that. You know, consider what it means for someone who may be childless, you know, not by choice. And how they can best support employees that find themselves in this situation. So again, I'm really grateful and honored to be a part of this conversation with you, Christine. And I really appreciate all the work that the New Legacy Institute is doing, to really just raise this topic, and to bring it out of the shadows. And to have these hard conversations, because if we don't start the conversation, we're never going to figure out, you know, how to really create solutions. And people have been silent for so long about their journeys, about parenting and non parenting, and their choices to parent, or choices not to parent, or the lack of choice. And so, you know, how that really impacts people, day to day is absolutely an inclusion issue.

**Christine Erickson 06:03**

Yeah, thank you so much, Erin. You're absolutely right. And thank you so much also for sharing your story. And I'm so sorry that, that was your experience. We've spoken with Pamela Tsigdinos, on this show, as well, who's had a different but similar journey. And she speaks to the real survivorship of IV... IVF participants, and the side that we don't talk about that much. So, thank you for honoring your own story and all the women who follow in that, and their partners who've been impacted by that as well. We really appreciate it. Yes, inclusion, like just the base of inclusion from a DEI perspective... I love the model, that your company has, Inclusive Mindset, and the three tenants that you shape that with. Can you speak to us a little bit about that?

**Dr. Erin Conner 07:03**

Sure, sure. I know, we have talked for years about inclusive mindset. And, you know, I, along with my co-founder, and the president of Inclusion Design Group, Dereca Blackmon, have really looked towards making this conversation around diversity and equity and inclusion, very accessible. And at its core, practicing an inclusive mindset means being brave. It means being humble. And it means being

dedicated. So in being brave, we have to ask ourselves tough questions, that maybe we aren't comfortable confronting all the time. And being brave... sometimes that means you have to interrupt bias, where we see it, or advocate on behalf of a marginalized group, or individual. Being humble, is about really listening. And acknowledging that you may not have any idea about the experience of someone else, simply because it's not your experience. You know. And so being able to approach that with humility is a really key mindset practice. Right? So we focus on, because it's not just about the actions that we do. Actions are incredibly important. And that, in fact, is what drives me to be dedicated, right? It's all about what you're doing to demonstrate that you're practicing this mindset. We've got to be thinking first. All of our actions, hopefully, will be coming from a place of reflection. Am I willing to be brave? Am I willing to be humble, and listen with respect to other people's experiences? And, am I willing to be dedicated. And in this context? I think it's particularly poignant... because as we talked about being brave... Right? Like you said, this is a conversation that does not happen every day. Right? And that, you know, in some circles falls out of favor. Because people have this assumption that being, you know, an advocate for people who are without children means somehow being against people who do have children. Which is absolutely false. You know, I as an... as a diversity and inclusion consultant I will be the first to tell you, maternal wall bias is a well documented fact, there are so many other kinds of biases that go against parents, that's real. And, we can be in favor of policies that support people who are not parents, and who do not... who are not caregivers, at the same time as we support people who are. So being brave means acknowledging that, pushing forward, advocating within your organizations where you see that bias taking place against people without children. Being humble, means if you maybe don't have the experience, being willing to say, You know what? Just because, you know, I don't know what it is to be asked to work extra hours because you're a non-parent, or, to be... to make... to have assumptions made about my time outside of work, I'm still willing to be humble enough to validate the experience that you've had. Right? And to listen, maybe if I've been the one who's practiced that bias, to listen with humility, and to approach this conversation, responding from that place of humility. And then being dedicated is, of course, doing something about it. What are the actions that you can take every day? And I'm excited because there's a tool that you're going to talk about later. So I'll save that for later. But that's going to hopefully inspire people to action,

that's going to help people figure out, you know, what is it you can specifically do to support people that are suffering from these different forms of biases?

**Christine Erickson 10:28**

Yeah, thank you for that, Erin. I love the Inclusive Mindset model, because I feel like it's, it's a portal to humanizing the conversation. And, you know, takes the focus off of some of those, just the elevated discord, if you will, of things where we get lost in the divisiveness or the potential divisiveness of things. And this brings it back to our humanity in our listening, and who are we being in each moment. When we recognize things, when maybe we do something that is harmful, that we're not aware of. Are we really open to learning that? And so I think it's a really beautiful model, and really poignant wording. So thank you for bringing that to us. Of course, yeah. Yeah. I think that, you know, when you... you touched on some of the inequities, such as working longer hours, or being expected to, basically. If you're single... single and without children, if you're without children. What are some of those other nuances in the workplace that happen, that are unspoken, or action isn't taken about, yet? And yet, they've been going on for a very long time that we... culture makes us accustomed to doing those things? And maybe we say yes, when we mean, no. Or maybe we feel like we don't have a choice to do those things, to keep things going. What's your perspective on some of the major things that happen in the workplace for people without children?

**Dr. Erin Conner 12:06**

I do think that there's this sense that people who don't have children don't really have much of a life outside of work. Or not a life, that's more valuable than the work that they share, that they're doing within the office. And, I think that manifests itself in a lot of different ways. You know, whether it's who gets to have the holiday time off, or, you know, what the schedules are, or what the healthcare options happen to be for individuals. What qualifies for leave. All of these different issues, which at times actually have financial implications. Right? They they are very real and present for people who don't have children. And, you know, they've... they've actually done a study, recently. The Trades Union Congress did the study. And they showed that women without children are the group that's most likely to do unpaid overtime. They are the most likely group to do unpaid overtime. Right? And so, when you think about what does that mean, from a financial perspective, what

are people losing? What does it mean, to practice equity? In in the office? You know, I think that there's an... there's an unspoken, buy in. That we all are kind of participating in. When we think about parental leave for our colleagues, right? It's not just the employers who write the check. It's not just the people who take the leave. Everybody kind of implicitly is bought into this idea that people who have children should be able to take time off. Whether that means that, you know, we kind of all come together and, and, and put in together to make sure that we're making that transition smooth, and covering the productivity of the other individual. We're willing to do that, as a part of a collective workplace, because we value the time our colleague is going to be able to spend with their child. And that's an important thing, right? That's a thing worth advocating for. But I think at the end of the day, there are people who hold a resentment. Not against the parents themselves, of course, because no would advocate against that. But I think that there is this... this feeling, sometimes, for people that says, well, you know, when will it be my turn? Right? Maybe they have a loved one that they want to be able to care for, because they're not doing well, or maybe they have a friend in need. Or maybe they want to take time off and adopt a pet and spend time with that with that animal, in order to be able to transition them in. Or maybe, you know, they want to do any number of things. Just spend some time doing the thing that's important to them. Learn new skill, travel, all of these things while, of course, it's kind of an incomplete comparison. It's difficult to say, you know, this is the same as having a child, and clearly, it's not. I'm not trying to make that comparison equal. What I am trying to do is complicate the conversation. And say it's a conversation worth having. Because it never gets to be that person's turn if they decide not to have a child, or if they're unable to have have a child. Right? It's never their turn.

**Christine Erickson 15:02**

Yeah. And it's not about the apples to apples, as you're alluding to, or, you know, having a child is equal to x. That's not the point. It's the quality and the value of each employee, as you spoke of earlier. And how do we begin to shift that so that we're seeing people in an equitable view. And... and changing their experiences in the workplace to truly feel included and acknowledged. It doesn't have to be in the same way. It shouldn't be in the same way. We're all different... living different lives. We all have different family structures and choices we've made in life. But we all have other things to do and experience. As you said. And I think just the

freedom to be able to do that, without trying to measure up to some bar that has been set in a... in a pro-family way, or pro-children way, is... is the next best step in how we treat employees. And how we create a work culture of recognizing each other, both where we're similar and where these differences lie. Whether that's in our skills, or our lifestyles, not being acknowledged, has an opposite impact. As you said before, you know, resentment can grow, or just exhaustion. All kinds of things. People are experiencing different things all of the time. And so when that goes unacknowledged, it builds, right? It exacerbates the situation. And so what do we do with that? I think then things become misnamed in the workplace. What's happening with relationships with communication, work performance, it can be any of it, because we're not really identifying this. We don't talk about it in a way that we identify it as this.

**Dr. Erin Conner 16:52**

Absolutely. No, it's... it's really interesting, you say that. I was talking with someone, an individual that was part of an organization that we work with. He was sharing the story about how, you know, he has children, and he's got soccer games to go to right after work. And so at five, which is when his contract says his day is done, he would leave and go to the soccer game to support his children. Absolutely a worthy endeavor. And his complaint was, he said, "You know, I do that on a regular basis, because I want to be a good dad. And I also want to be a good employee. And so I put in my time at work, and I'm productive, and I do the things that I'm asked to do. But then there's... there are individuals who are able to work longer hours." Now, here's kind of where the nuance comes in. Right. Who are able to? So, maybe they are able to, but do they want to? Should they? How does that in... how does it influence workplace culture? Right? So the individual who's the father, he was saying, "You know, I really feel slighted because this individual who's able to work 12 hours a day is going to be up for promotion. And he's going to get it because he's done all of this extra work, because he has all of this extra time." The flip side of the very same coin is: Did this individual want to do this? Right? Did they feel pressured to do this? And even if they did. Even if they said, Man, I want to get in here, and I want to work 12 hours a day, because I have 12 hours, and work is the only thing that matters to me in my life. Fine. What is the workplace culture that is being developed? Right? What what is the equity practices at play, when we think about what... what's been what's been created here, right? There's

a bias, very clearly, against the father, who was leaving at five. There's a bias, very clearly, against the person who's not a parent, who's having to work 12 hours a day in order to feel like they can get this promotion. There's a bias across the board. Right? It's actually two sides of the same coin. If we're able to argue for free and flex policies, and for reason agnostic leave, these kinds of policies actually help both groups. Right. Because it begins to level the playing field.

**Christine Erickson 19:09**

Absolutely. And I think... thank you for that example. I think what I appreciate about so many things that you said is what we're speaking to today, has always taken into consideration the the situation and the needs of parents. We're not bypassing that, or challenging it, or taking anything away. It's really valuing every employee, and their inner lives and needs. And yes, and where does it begin? Where in the culture, where in the policy process, do we... how do we roll back and look at: How did this begin? Like, where's this inequity rooted? And... and, sort of, shake that out. To look at these different scenarios and how it's impacting everybody ultimately. And if it's impacting people differently, but individually, it's impacting the collective. And it's impacting the company. And in whatever ways you want to measure that, you know, whether that's bottom line or other KPIs. But it is something that is not measured. Currently. You know? It is not measured. So again, beginning to look at it and put it into a process that is actually named. And named and measured, is the beginning to that. Because I think it's a real loss in the workplace. Not only, of course, for employees, but the... the entire organization. Because people aren't feeling free. The dad is thinking about taking off for the soccer game, and what implications that has. And someone is still at work at 10 o'clock or whatever. You know. So, yeah, I think if we start looking at how do we ease... Not only how do we ease it, but how do we recognize that? And then how do we start to begin to ease that, to have these difficult conversations? Yeah, and I mean, would you say, within human resources within DEI... I mean, we have frameworks to work with. this is another piece of that diversity. Right? It's not that we have to make everything up, it's that it's been a more difficult conversation in some ways. Because it just hasn't been brought... brought out in the same ways. And that... this is a very intersectional, diverse community, people without children. Right? So we're talking about layers of bias that some people are facing in the workplace. It's very complex.

**Dr. Erin Conner 21:43**

Absolutely. I mean, like, I love that you raise this this point around intersectionality, because it's, it's critical. You know. How does one's identity, whether it's their race, gender, sexual orientation, marital, or parenting status, intersect to create the bias they experience, or the privilege? Right? And, being able to complicate this conversation, right, and as we mentioned at the top, you know, it's not this is easy, it's that it's worth it? Right. So let's... let's dig in. Let's be willing to say, you know, how does this impact people? What can we do to alleviate that? How do we create policies that value the time of everyone? That value the effort that... the performance? What does it mean, to really create a workplace culture that respects the boundary of time? Here? Yeah, right. If we respect the boundary of time as a culture, which is something that we haven't been able to do. Right? As a society, we say, the more face time you have--which is another huge issue that's part of the DEI conversation these days, is remote work, and having that... well, this person was at their desk for 80 hours a week. Well, maybe that person just really inefficient. Let's talk about the performance. Right? So I think, you know, being able to have these conversations, and across the different boundaries, is really going to be something that's that's needed as we create solutions. But at the bottom line of it all, if we can say, How do we universally respect this boundary of time in a way that we just have never done as a culture. And, to be fair, as a way... in a way that a lot of millennials, and younger generations, are pushing for. They value workplaces. The data... I was thinking about this when you were talking about measurement, and what we measure. And you know, they've really value working for companies that offer paid leave. Reason agnostic, paid leave? You know, that's something that's a recruitment and retention strategy for a lot of companies. So I know, you know... We can talk more about how to think about this strategically. But again, I'm just so grateful. We're at least having the conversation.

**Christine Erickson 23:53**

Absolutely. Thank you so much, Erin. I think that the more we delve in and the more we are open, and having these conversations, then the more it, sort of, invites more conversation. And I want to say normalizes. I don't always like that phrase, but I think it invites more conversation. And if we can I go back to the tenants of your model too. If we step into those, that mindset, you know, there's nothing we

can lose. We're just listening. We're just listening. We're observing. We're paying attention. We're making sense of how we may be impacting a person or the environment. And I think that's really beautiful. Today, we're discussing what it means to be included in the workplace for people without children. We're gonna take a short pause and we'll be back with Dr. Erin Conner and we'll speak more about specific workplace policies and how to create an equitable culture.

### **VoiceAmerica** 24:55

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### 25:44

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### 26:46

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**VoiceAmerica 27:00**

You are listening to New Legacy Radio with Christine Erickson. Now back to the show. Here is Christine Erickson.

**Christine Erickson 27:06**

Welcome back, everybody. Today we're speaking with Dr. Erin Connor. And we are addressing what it means to create inclusive and equitable cultures in the workplace for people without children. Thank you again for being here today, Erin. And thank you for a first first great half, and wonderful overview of of this environment, and what is currently happening, and what what is possible in this space. I know you touched on an overview and some wonderful examples about how having fair and flex policies... leave policies, what is needed for people without children, and how it currently impacts people with and without children. Is there anything else that you would like to speak to that, about what organizations can start looking at in their policies, that we haven't touched on yet?

**Dr. Erin Conner 27:58**

Yeah, I mean, I think, I'm actually really encouraged. In this time in our history, as a result of some of the change that's happened post COVID, with the remote work, and work from home. Because it's brought into the conversation, the fact that people really appreciate the opportunity to decide where they work, how they work, when they work. And that inherently... that conversation is going to inherently benefit people without children, and people with children. To be honest, right? A lot of people want to work from home because of the busy hectic schedules they have with their families, with taking kids to school, et cetera. And then there are others who just... Maybe they're a morning person, and they work best from six to nine, and then they want to take a break. You know. It's being able to decide, being able to have the agency to say, You know, this is what is going to make me most productive, this is where I'm going to be... . That's the conversation that works across the board. So, I think if I were to say anything here, it would be just to really try to bring this conversation to more... a more universal place. Right? So, instead of thinking, you know... If you were working in HR, if you're advocating for these kinds of changes within your organization, being able to really envision this as something that's not just specifically for people without children, but that actually

benefits everyone. In general, more flexible schedules work better for every single person within the organization. Right? Regardless of why. And so the thing to really embrace is that it shouldn't matter why. We're having these neutral... reason neutral approaches, respects the privacy, dignity, value of people's time and the boundaries that they have around that time, and the needs that they have for that time. Right. So that would be a big thing for me. I think, you know, not just having policies that are fair and flexible, and that give people that... that flexibility, but also making sure that they can use those those policies. Right? It's not just something in the manual, it's not just something, you know, in the handbook. But that people really feel empowered to use that. It's not... you don't get these kinds of side comments as people are walking out the door, like, Oh, you're leaving already. No, it must be great to be you. Yeah. Exactly. Right? That creating that kind of stigma, makes people feel like, you know, maybe it's here on the books, but I'm not going to take it. And that works. Again, I come back to this constantly. Because I think, you know, it's, it's a possibility that people can somehow equate this pro... people-without-children movement, that we're really hoping to develop here, with being anti-family. And it's just not. Right. The more that we're advocating for fair flex hours, the more than we're advocating for people who don't just have infants, right? But people who have 10-year-olds, and people who have 17-year-olds. People who have children that have grown and gone away, and they just want to be able to have the time that they need to do the things that are important for them. It helps everyone. So being able to really support policies like that, and then ensure that people feel like there's a culture that encourages the use of that policy, is really critical here.

**Christine Erickson 31:24**

Yeah, I love that you said that. I, I think that sometimes, in this conversation, we get so caught. I always think of it as sort of, like our head down focused, you know, on a single issue when we think about people having children. And it's the actual when they have the child or adopt the child or in that space. And I think, but after.. what then? You know? And that's what universal policy advocates for. Even... even the name, New Legacy. That's what I meant by it. It's like the portal I'm coming in with is based on my experiences, and the experiences of our collective community of childless and child free people, but a new legacy is about advocating for everybody doing things that lifts up everyone. But this is the way we're entering

the conversation. Because these... this is the impact on us currently. Absolutely. Yeah, beautiful. I'm so glad you mentioned that. And I always think that, too. Like, Well, if your child is grown, or they're five or ten, or whatever years... Don't you want that leave time? You know? Maybe to take a break from them, maybe to be with them? I don't know. But I think, I think that's a really strong point that you mentioned about. You know, it's... it's a good thing for all of us. And having people be able to take that break when they need it, and why they need it. And coming back somehow nourished, or are filled to the workplace. Not just for performance, but for our relationships, for our communication and for our own well being, and mental health, within the workspace is so important. I mean, we've seen that from so many directions. You know, and so why not ease the pressure on employees by creating a culture, as you said, that accepts this, and actually encourages it. So people can be well. Absolutely. So people can be excited about life, and what they want to do with their time.

**Dr. Erin Conner** 33:26

Yeah. I mean, I'll say, again, you know. I'm encouraged by the... the movement that's happening around remote work, and also around some... some companies. There are a few companies that are now really embracing this notion of unlimited paid time off. And, you know, the first time you hear that... those words, all strung together in that order...

**Christine Erickson** 33:47

I just had a somatic reaction.

**Dr. Erin Conner** 33:53

People, you know, they don't know what to do. But I'll tell you... You know the experience that a lot of these organizations have had embracing this model, is not that people, you know, just say, Well okay. Well, I'm gonna take off 360 of these 365 days. In reality, what ends up happening is that people come to work, they work really hard, they feel like they're working for an organization that cares about them, they take the time off when they need it, and they come back, when they when they're able. You know, they... they've... they've shown that it's really not something that decreases productivity. And in a lot of cases, it increases productivity. Because people show up, first of all, you know, rested and ready, and

energized. And then they, secondly... they show up to work for a company that cares about them. Right. And, you know, psychological safety has been shown over and over, and over again to be one of the biggest factors in productivity within an organization. So if you feel like you work for a company that trusts you. Yeah. Right? What is that, that word, trust, it's such a critical part of this conversation, and so many conversations around this question of time boundary. Right? That word, trust, means so much, because if you as a, as a manager, as a leader, if you're able to trust your employee to be productive, to do the things that they said they would do, to meet deadlines, to communicate if they can't. Like, all of those things that go into a, a healthy working relationship. If you can trust them to do that, whether that's happening at six in the morning, whether that's happening, you know, for several months, and then that person takes some time off and then comes back... However, that's taking place you being able to trust in it means that they're going to trust you. Right? It's a huge part of having a healthy work relationship, and feeling like you're included, and that you're valued, and that you belong in the place where you work every day. And I can't tell you the number of studies that demonstrate what a difference it makes, when a person feels like they belong, when a person feels like they are not experiencing bias at work. There are 75% fewer sick days, right, when you do not feel like you are experiencing bias at work. Why? Because people know that their valued, that time is valued, who they are, is valued. So, I would just say, you know, to anyone listening, If you are able to be a decision maker in this, and you're nervous about it, take the time to develop this relationship of trust, with your direct reports with your team. Take the time to do that and see just how far it gets you. Yeah. Right. When you demonstrate that trust. And, you know, if you have an employee that's not able to meet deadlines while working remotely, or that really has struggled to do this, then of course, that's something you're going to take into your management decisions, and maybe that's not a good fit for them. But if you have people who are telling you, you know, this is what I want and need in my life. And you respond to that with, I'm here to respect the dignity of your adult life that you've made, whether that's having children or not having children, or the choices that you have available to you--many, many of us don't have that as a choice that's available to us. And so what does that mean? If you as a leader are simply... simply able to say, I respect you, your dignity, your ability to make choices for your life, what you want to do with your time, we are going to have good communication about this, and make sure that we're honoring

each other in this relationship, that goes a very long way. A very long way, towards really building a strong team.

**Christine Erickson 37:24**

Beautiful. Yeah, that mutuality and relationship, I think it, as you said, Erin, allows for so much. And I think, you know, if you go back even to just different ways of learning, absolutely different ways of working, people's different health and lifestyles. I mean, what it allows for people to honor their own lives, and to work to their best ability when they know, and how they know, how to do that, I can't imagine, like wanting a roadblock to that. You know? And I think, you know, some of the default structuring of companies, whether, you know, it's the hierarchy, or the nine to five, or the office building that they invested in... You know, a lot of the things that... and ways that we've just been doing things for so many years, initially complicate that, because we're holding on to things that really don't... no longer work. Only in that sense. That doesn't mean that some people still don't want to go to the office, or that having a physical space is a bad thing. That's great. But offering those other options, and really understanding who employees are, as much as what they do in an organization, I think can only increase value, all around. Absolutely. Yeah, and as you said, dignity, I love that. I love that word. I think there's HR policy, culture development. I think starting with human dignity is where the value begins. You know, if we start there. And again, sitting in those tenets, I know I keep hammering this home, like I'm a student of the company, but I think those... those core tenets of being in that inclusive mindset, if you're in that, then you're open to what works for somebody else, because it's not about you.

**Dr. Erin Conner 39:16**

Exactly, yeah, exactly. Yeah. You know, I love... I love that perspective on it. Because it's true. You know, if you're practicing an Inclusive Mindset, you're brave enough to know, you know, that, Hey, I'm gonna take a chance here, I'm gonna be a little vulnerable here. I'm going to, you know, be willing to call out bias where I see it. I'm going to be brave here. You know? And then I'm going to be humble. And I'm going to be open to whatever life choices that you've decided for your life, I'm going to be humble in respecting that, in respecting and celebrating the life choices that we've made. You know they're all very different. And I'm... my my hope is that whatever solutions we come up with related to this and to other issues

of inclusion and identity, right? That celebrating other employees' life choices becomes a part of that solution. Right? Celebrating and not just tolerating. But really taking the time to celebrate that is really important.

**Christine Erickson 40:17**

Yeah, one of my... I'm sure there's a longer quote about it. But... just advice that somebody gave me once many years ago is just one of my favorite lines is--to go where you're celebrated. And I think, my gosh, what if that was your lead-line for an interview. You know? For assessing a corporate culture, a company culture? Yeah, it doesn't mean that there aren't difficult conversations, or projects, or all of those things. Yeah. But if you already felt that, who would you be in that space?

**Dr. Erin Conner 40:49**

That is really powerful. That is really powerful. To go where you're celebrated. Yeah. Right? Yeah. Yeah. And I think, you know, as we, as we are, facing what people have called the Great Resignation. Right. As a, as a society of people are really struggling to figure out how to fill all these empty seats, and figure out, you know, what does this work look like? And to be honest, the research has shown, a big reason why people left those seats to begin with, is because of a failure to have the kind of flexibility around work hours that they need. And... and a failure to feel like they belong. Right? Yes. There's a study that has demonstrated, when people feel like their work isn't valued, when they feel like they don't belong, those are the top two indicators that, yeah, they're going to be a part of that massive wave outside of the workplace. So I think it's a real opportunity, honestly, for employers to embrace these different fair flex policies and reason agnostic leave policies, because it allows you to recruit people, and to retain people. It's a very attractive element. And, ultimately, you know, I know, and I have to... I have to say this. Every company is different, every organization, they're gonna have different needs different abilities, different, you know, possibilities. So there isn't a one size fits all solution. I don't mean to represent it that way. But I think if you... if you are putting, really, the value behind everything that you do, like really placing value on that person's life, on their time, on their... on their ability to choose the things that they want to do with their time. That's going to take you at least halfway there.

**Christine Erickson 42:34**

Yeah, yeah. Very far. And one thing... I always have to throw this in, because my, my work is focused on consent. But when I look at the Great Resignation, or these changes in what people are... are willing to engage in, and not. You know, even if they need the job, like people are exhausted, and it's, it's from continuing this cycle of things they really don't want to live. And often that has to do with the culture, is not just the work itself. It's the... it's the culture driving that. And, or the ways that we work. And I think... The way I view the great resignation is this is people taking back their consent. Yeah. You know. What do I consent to? And what do I no longer consent to. And not... not to simplify it, but I think that's a big part of it. And I think so much of the way we structure things or have structured things in the past, require the absence of consent to keep operating the way that we have. So I think people, surely during the pandemic and, as you said, working at home--some people losing their jobs because things closed--it was a real time to reassess these things, and what we value, and yes, What will I consent to? And, is this relationship mutual, in the workplace?

**Dr. Erin Conner 43:56**

Absolutely. Yeah, I mean, a shout out to "pie culture." Beyonce just came up with a song called, Break My Soul. Yeah. Big theme in the song, titled, Break My Soul, you will break my soul. I'm leaving this nine to five, right? So yeah, she's acknowledging what so many people in our culture right now are feeling, that they are stuck in a workplace pattern that doesn't ultimately work for them. And, you know, a lot of how we designed work, a lot... many of the systems, honestly, in our culture, a lot of how we design the educational system, a lot of how we design the healthcare system... we designed these systems in very different times. Yeah. And we have failed to radically change them in ways that better serve who we are in this time. And I think, beginning to acknowledge that there's a very big difference between who we are 2022, and who we were 100 years ago, and allowing our workplace cultures to reflect that change. Why do we do the things the way we do? Right? Now tradition, is in and of itself, a kind of bias, right? And and tradition that... Ernst Young has this, this framework around bias that looks at tradition and preference. And then they say, instead of relying so much on the... the way things have always been done, or the way things you prefer... the way you prefer things to be done. Because, you know, we've been doing it that way for so long. Right.

Why not look at what the actual requirement is? What's the actual requirement here. Right? And so if you're a manager, you're a people leader, and you're thinking, No, man, I really am used to people being at their desk, I'm used to people only taking leave when they've just had, you know, a child, I'm used to this vague thing. Maybe that tradition isn't actually serving the people, every single person that's working within your organization. Can we work that to be more reflective of who we are, now? We're in the technology age as even as we have this... you're recording this podcast. This wasn't even a genre that existed, raising technology, we're on different continents right now.

**Christine Erickson** 46:02

Yeah.

**Dr. Erin Conner** 46:03

I mean, we can't continue to imagine that things won't change, and that they shouldn't change. Absolutely, they should change.

**Christine Erickson** 46:11

And as you said, I do think it's an opportunity across the board, given whatever differences among companies in their capabilities to, you know... it's time to reassess. And as you said, the education system, the way we work, those were in response to very huge world altering events. You know, the world has been altered again. You know, COVID give us, or it's still giving us, a space to reassess, you know. How... how do we take care of ourselves, and how do we protect others, as well? Is the pan... pandemic driving that for workplaces. And I love this conversation so much and feel so great about it, because you really brought what, you know, all of this work with the Institute means to me. It is about lifting everybody, ultimately. It's about equity. So you can do what you want, and I can do what I want. And we can both feel good about that. And I can support you in that. Because it's not, it's not impacting my life. In that way, I don't need to control it, I don't need to change it. I don't need to work on accepting it, I just need to honor it. That's it, I just need to honor your choices. Thank you for everything we've spoken about today. And I do want to mention that. Yes, you mentioned the HR tool that we're going to put up on the Institute website today. And Erin has graciously collaborated with me on this. So thank you for that. We really want to

give... give people, What's Next. You know. A starting point to this conversation. And so we're going to share a few things with you that we we think are poignant drivers of what you need to know to start this conversation. And then what are some things to consider? How do you know... how do you know this work environment? Even as we talk about things changing. I think even demography, demography and economic models, we're not meeting the population that is today. And it's the same within the workspace. So how do we begin looking at what is, not what was, or what we think we should hold on to, or what we think should be, but what needs to become. And then we'll... we'll give you some... some actions that you can take now, and things to consider in in your organizations. This is a great tool for... you know, if you're an individual within the community of people without children, you can take it to your HR person. Or if you're fortunate enough to work with DEI people in your space, share it with them. Start a conversation with peers in... in, in your organization. If that's a space that allows that, and you feel safe doing that. And for HR managers, you know, we're here. We're here to support you in these conversations and in making some of these shifts. So again, thank you so much for being here, Erin, today. Gosh, that was a breath of fresh air and amazing depth and breadth that you covered as well. So thank you for being here and for your wonderful expertise and insight. It's truly appreciated. Can you share share with people how they can learn more about your firm and your colleagues and and what Inclusion Design Group does?

**Dr. Erin Conner 49:24**

Absolutely. Thank you. First and foremost, Christine, this has been such an incredible, incredible opportunity for me. I've loved being a part of the conversation with you and wish you so much success with this. My name again is Dr. Erin Connor, and I use she and her pronouns. I can be found at [www.inclusiondesign.com](http://www.inclusiondesign.com). I'm the co-founder and vice president at Inclusion Design Group. And my colleagues and I do DEI consulting, specializing in learning and development.

**Christine Erickson 49:57**

Highly recommend. So thank you again, Erin. Thank you, everybody for listening. We will have that HR tool up on New Legacy Institute and our social media platforms later today. And you can listen to a replay of our conversation with Dr.

Erin Conner later this afternoon, or when it's re-aired in your country or time zone. Thank you so much. Bye bye.

**Dr. Erin Conner** 50:19

Thank you. Take care.

**VoiceAmerica** 50:25

Thank you for listening to New Legacy Radio. We hope Christine and her guests have given you the context and insight to connect with our community in new ways. What personal or professional change might you consider to acknowledge and include our diverse community of people without children? Until we speak again, we invite you to engage with us on any of our platforms.