MODULE OVERVIEW

Covering at work: Playing down who you are to fit in

Adaptive module | ~20 min

Six in ten employees tone down part of themselves at work, and so do half of straight white men: covering, named by Kenji Yoshino and measured by Deloitte, is not a minority issue. It wears people out and erodes commitment. This module draws the line between chosen adaptation and covering under pressure, then gives three actions every colleague can take starting tomorrow.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

01 Recognize covering: toning down part of yourself (background, health, age, personal life) to blend in better.

02 Distinguish chosen adaptation, a legitimate social contract, from covering driven by fear of judgment.

03 Assess what covering costs: exhaustion, falling commitment, and a cycle that pushes the next colleague to cover too.

04 Act at three levels: name the pressure you feel, lead by example when you manage, and take the three actions as a colleague.

WHO IT'S FOR

Anyone who wants to be themselves at work, and managers who want a climate where everyone dares to.

- **Prerequisite:** none

HOW THE MODULE WORKS

Self-paced, with practice tailored to each learner.

1. **Self-assessment**: on 9 dimensions, to gauge current habits and guide the practice.
2. **Expert video**: 10 minutes, with 3 pauses for reflection.
3. **Practice scenarios**: the first 2 chosen from the self-assessment, then 16 optional ones. Every answer gets feedback: what it leads to, and one way to improve.
4. **Dated commitment**: one action to try, written by the learner or picked from the suggestions.
5. **Memo to download**: key takeaways, questions, commitment, personal notes and checklists.

ASSESSMENT AND COMPLETION

Pass mark: 80%

The score takes into account your answers to the practice scenarios, your commitment and, where relevant, any additional learning activities. Passing requires a commitment and a score of at least 80%.

METHODS & MODELS

- Covering – Kenji Yoshino, New York University (NYU)
- Chosen adaptation versus forced covering – Afthonios method
- Moving beyond covering on three levels (self, manager, colleague) – Afthonios method

SOURCES & REFERENCES

- Kenji Yoshino – law professor at New York University (NYU), author of Covering (2006), who originated the concept
- Deloitte (with Christie Smith and Kenji Yoshino) – study on covering: about 60% of employees say they cover
- Deloitte – 74% of employees report a negative impact from covering, 54% say it harms their ability to do their job well
- Deloitte / NYU (2023–2024) – covering, authenticity, and well-being at work

Module created by Afthonios.com.

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