



## Facilitator Guide

### Description

*“The Essence of Who You Are”* focuses on the experience of a mother raising children with disabilities during COVID-19 and the resources that helped her navigate uncertain times successfully. This story offers participants insights into understanding the complexities that families living with disabilities experience, the inherent challenges, and steps to create an inclusive culture for co-workers to be successful.

### Objectives

Participants will be challenged to:

- Begin new dialogues on issues facing our co-workers and our community
- Learn how to be brave (*as we listen to Stephanie's story and others' sharing within their debrief discussions*) and lead from where you are
- Support Ameren's efforts to build a more inclusive workplace and community

### Target Audience

This program is intended for groups, organizations and people interested in building inclusive communities through dialogue and discussion.

### Tips for Facilitating

As a facilitator, your role is to encourage discussion. Considering the opinions and points of view presented in this presentation, focus discussion on those conversations and thoughts that affect inclusion, respect, and valuing others. To best facilitate the discussion, **carefully review the video and prepared materials in advance of presentation.**

## Guidelines:

- Review all presentation materials and the video in advance of your session.
- As you begin the session, establish ground rules for sharing (**see *Ground Rules Samples***).
- Stress the need to be respectful of others.
- Set expectations for the session by sharing the objectives (**see *Objective Section above***) and agenda.
- Actively manage time to allow sufficient discussion of the topics highlighted in the video.
- You may encounter off topic comments in your session. Prepare to steer the conversation back on topic. An example of something you could say might be “***That is an interesting comment. Let’s discuss it further after the session to allow time to cover discussion items more directly related to the video.***”
- At the conclusion of the session, thank everyone for their participation.

## Materials and Equipment Needed

Presentation: “*The Essence of Who You Are*”

Click on link: [The Essence Of Who You Are](#)  
**Wi-Fi or data connection is needed to view video**

Laptop with Video Screen for showing video via virtual platform (*i.e., Skype or Microsoft Teams Applications*)

Facilitator Guide

Participant Booklet

PowerPoint Presentation

## Time Requirements

Skype or Teams Meeting Log-in Preparation: 5 - 10 minutes

Video: 8:19 minute runtime

Discussion Time: 30 - 40 minutes

## Presentation

### Introducing the Program

Welcome participants. Explain that the story they are about to hear focuses on courage and inclusion. Courage is to check in with our values, weigh the options, become brave, and do what is right. Courage is to live your values consistently. Inclusion is to create a space where people feel seen, heard, and valued. During COVID-19, the pandemic has disrupted family routines around the world. For families with children or household members, who have medical conditions or developmental disabilities, these disruptions are amplified. StoryCast 1 focuses on courage and being brave every day. It features an Ameren co-worker sharing her experience on raising a family with disabilities, parenting, and hope. Stephanie offers her perspective of those living with disabilities, her personal views about raising her children and the joys and challenges of temporarily working remotely with children also learning at home--an entirely new way of living during a pandemic. Ask participants to be thinking about the messages shared and what it means to them.

Tell the group that you will be asking questions following the video.

### Provide Sample Ground Rules for StoryCast Discussion

Facilitators, encourage people to be involved as active listeners and participants. No one else knows another person's thoughts and personal experiences as well as that person. Suggested ground rules are below. The bracketed portions are optional, so, feel free to include or not.

- |             |   |
|-------------|---|
| Participate | I encourage you to participate. [You will find you will get more out of the program, likely, enjoy it more and hopefully, even have a little fun.] <i>Note to Facilitator: give advance notice that you will be calling on co-workers by name to ensure you have their attention and to avoid embarrassing co-workers.</i>  |
| Respect     | We expect everyone to be respectful. [Not everyone may agree with each other, but when we are respectful, we live up to our company's values. With respect, we establish, maintain and even improve the way we relate to one another.]  |
| Open        | We hope you will be open.   |
| Educate     | We're here to learn and to inform, but we are all students of diversity, equity and inclusion. [Some may not have any experience participating in discussions of this nature or on these topics. And some may not have done so in a work environment. So, we expect understanding as we learn and find ways to talk about these issues, because some of us may not feel we have the "right" words to share our thoughts.] |

Share                      Sharing our experiences, respectfully, can help us connect with each other. Doing so, also can help us build trust.

As you ask questions, remember to allow people time to think before they respond. Do not jump in too quickly with your own answers. The role of the facilitator is to generate discussion. Ideally, you will be neutral and not share your perspective.

## **Group Discussion**

For large audiences (more than 10-12 people), consider dividing into smaller groups to discuss questions. Key points from each small group can be shared with the larger group and captured on the flip chart at the conclusion of their discussion

## Discussion Questions

1. What were some of the messages Stephanie shared related to courage and inclusion?

### Possible Answers:

- Inclusion is created when everyone feels seen, heard and valued.
  - Inclusion asks us to take what is different and sometimes uncomfortable and make it a part of how we do business, a part of our culture and a part of who we trust and rely upon.
  - Through physical and mental challenges one may encounter, it's important to have a network and support system as a resource.
  - Success is being able to have independence knowing you have laid a foundation.
2. Stephanie stated, "*There's so much opportunity to help people on their journey to get to a better place for them. That's what's reflected in my home life.*" What are some things Stephanie does at home to support her family? Are any of them familiar concepts that you either can or do use at home or at work that could enhance diversity, equity and inclusion?

### Possible Answers:

- Share my own story, as a member of the disability community, to be an ally, educate others and create awareness.
  - Create my own personal DE&I commitment statement and see it through/live up to it.
  - Check my own assumptions, challenge my biases and beliefs of what people are able to do.
  - Be understanding of others—learn about someone's interests, background and challenges outside of work.
  - Foster and support a work environment where co-workers feel comfortable asking for, flexibility and support.
  - We hope everyone brings their best selves to work and gets to know the whole person.
3. Stephanie advocates to "*look at a person's character regardless of their external appearance.*" What do you already do or what can you do to see each person as an individual?

### Possible Answers:

- Consistently welcome and introduce yourself to new team members.
- Share some personal information about yourself first, when appropriate.
- Reach out/connect with others that are different from you.
- Assume innocence when you meet or are getting to know co-workers.
- Recognize each co-worker has their own personal life and life experience that may be different from our own.

4. Stephanie talked about how Ameren cares about its co-workers as individuals. Stephanie's team members play an integral role in promoting diversity, equity and inclusion to ensure she succeeds. How have you or how could you get to know someone you work with?

**Possible Answers:**

- Keeping communication open allows us to learn about concerns of my team members. When we use this opportunity to interact with each other, better understand each other. It allows us to discover new or creative ways of achieving our outcomes more successfully.
  - Empowering our team members by giving them the opportunity to not only implement day-to-day tasks but to suggest new ideas and help make them a reality.
  - Talking to someone
  - Asking questions while respecting boundaries.
  - Spending time together while working and on free time (i.e., preparing meals, taking coffee break or connecting after work time). Note: during the COVID-19 pandemic, certain in-person activities may be restricted, but many of these activities can take place virtually or by leveraging technology. For those working on-site or in a blended capacity, all COVID-19 safety protocols must be followed.
5. Stephanie offers her perspective of those living with disabilities, her personal views about raising her children and the joys and challenges of temporarily working remotely with children also learning at home, an entirely new way of living during a pandemic. What are some ways that we can support team members who are balancing work/life during COVID-19?

**Possible Answers:**

- Ask your team members what they need (*i.e., what more can I do for you*).
- Being flexible as co-workers are navigating the next new normal of working differently.
- While working differently, encourage cross-team collaboration and relationship building.

## Review Objectives

Participants will be challenged to:

- Begin new dialogues on issues facing our co-workers and our community
- Learn how to be brave (*as we listen to Stephanie's story and others' sharing within their debrief discussions*) and lead from where you are
- Support Ameren's efforts to build a more inclusive workplace and community

## Closing Comments

Conclude the session by sharing your organization's or group's policy statement or position on diversity. Be sure to thank the participants for their contributions to discussions and for their time.

## Survey

Please take a few minutes to complete a brief survey on *The Courage to Live Your Values in Uncertain Times* video series:

Click on link: <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/2021DiscussionsAcrossDifferences>

***Let's keep the dialogue going.***