

Unequal Recognition

When others receive the praise and your contributions are overlooked

Being consistently overlooked can be painful. Recognition is not simply about wanting praise; it can be an important signal that your contribution has been seen, understood and valued.

What unequal recognition can look like

You may notice colleagues being thanked for shared work while your contribution is absent, ideas being acknowledged only after someone else repeats them, visible tasks receiving praise while quieter work goes unnoticed, or the same people repeatedly receiving opportunities and positive attention.

How it can affect you

Repeatedly feeling unseen can gradually affect confidence, motivation and belonging. You might begin working harder to prove yourself, stop sharing ideas, compare yourself with colleagues, question your abilities, or emotionally withdraw from the team.

Why it may happen

Recognition can be influenced by workplace culture, visibility, unconscious bias, communication style, hierarchy, remote working, different roles, established relationships and assumptions about what valuable work looks like. Neurodivergent employees may also find that important behind-the-scenes work, problem solving or less visible contributions are not always recognised in the same way.

What may help

Keep a record of your contribution. Note completed work, positive feedback, problems solved and outcomes. This is not about proving your worth; it can help make less visible work easier to communicate.

Make your work visible in a way that feels comfortable. Short progress updates, project summaries or regular check-ins can help others understand what you are contributing.

Ask for specific feedback. Rather than waiting for general praise, ask what is working well and where your contribution has made a difference.

Talk about recognition. If there is a repeated pattern, you can explain the impact and ask how contributions are acknowledged across the team.

Protect your sense of value. Recognition from others matters, but a lack of recognition does not erase the skill, care or effort you brought to the work.

A gentle reflection

Consider: *Which parts of my work are least visible? What contribution am I proud of? What would fair recognition look like for me?*

When to seek support

If unequal recognition is persistent, linked to discrimination, affects progression or opportunities, or is significantly affecting your wellbeing, consider speaking with a manager, HR, union representative or another trusted workplace support.

A message from Maggie

It can be difficult watching other people receive acknowledgement while wondering whether anybody has noticed what you have done. Please remember that being overlooked does not make your contribution less valuable. You are allowed to want fairness, to ask for feedback and to have your work recognised.

Space to Breathe Therapy