



PRIVILEGE WALK EXERCISE

PURPOSE: The purpose of the Privilege Walk Exercise is to learn to recognize how power and privilege can affect our lives even when we are not aware it is happening. The purpose is not to blame anyone for having more power or privilege or for receiving more help in achieving goals, but to have an opportunity to identify both obstacles and benefits experienced in our life.

NOTE: This is a very “high risk” activity that requires trust building and safety for participants; introducing this activity too early in the training or before building trust risks creating resentment and hurt that can inhibit further sharing and openness.

SUPPLIES AND SPACE NEEDED:

- Space large enough for participants to form a straight line with an arm’s length between them and the person on their left; there should be space in front of the line to move forward 10 steps or behind to be able to move back 10 steps.

DIRECTIONS FOR THE ACTIVITY:

- 1) Have participants form a straight line across the room about an arm’s length apart, leaving space in front and behind.
- 2) *State:* Listen to the following statements, and follow the instructions given. For example, when I read “If you are a white male, take one step forward,” only white males will move and everyone else will stand still. Each step should be an average length step. No one is going to check up on you, so if you feel you qualify to take a step then do so, if not then you may stay where you are. You are the judge of what you should do.
- 3) Read the statements one at a time allowing time for participants to take a step.
- 4) When all the statements have been read process the activity using the following questions:
 - What is your “gut reaction” to where you find yourself at the end of this list of privileges?
 - Are you surprised at where you are? How does it feel to be in front? In the middle? In back? Did you come to any new realizations? If so, which one had the most impact?

STATEMENTS:

If your ancestors were forced to come to the USA, not by choice, take one step back.

If your primary ethnic identity is American, take one step forward.

If you were ever called names because of your race, class, ethnicity, gender, or sexual orientation, take one step back.

If there were people of color who worked in your household as servants, gardeners, etc., take one step forward.

If your parents were professional, doctors, lawyers, etc., take one step forward.

If you were raised in an area where there was prostitution, drug activity, etc. take one step back.

If you ever tried to change you appearance, mannerisms, or behavior to avoid being judged or ridiculed, take one step back.

If you studied the culture of your ancestors in elementary school, take one step forward.

If you went to a school speaking a language other than English, take one step back.

If there were more than 50 books in your house when you grew up, take one step forward.

If you ever had to skip a meal or were hungry because there was not enough money to buy food when you were growing up, take one step back.

If you were brought to art galleries or plays by your parents, take one step forward.

If one of your parents were unemployed or laid off, not by choice, take one step back.

If you attended a private school or summer camp, take one step forward.

If your family ever had to move because they could not afford the rent, take one step back.

If you were told that you were beautiful, smart, and capable by your parents, take one step forward.

If you were ever discouraged from academics or jobs because of race, class, ethnicity, gender, or sexual orientation, take one step back.

If you were ever encouraged to attend a college by your parents, take one step forward.

If prior to age 18, you took a vacation out of the country, take one step forward.

If one of your parents did not complete high school, take one step back.

If your family owned your own house, take one step forward.

If you saw members of your race, ethnic group, gender, or sexual orientation were portrayed on television in degrading roles, take one step back.

If you were ever offered a good job because of your association with a friend or family member, take one step forward.

If you were ever denied employment because of your race, ethnicity, gender, or sexual orientation, take one step back.

If you were ever paid less, treated less fairly because of your race, ethnicity, gender, or sexual orientation, take one step back.

If you were ever accused of cheating or lying because of your race, ethnicity, gender, or sexual orientation, take one step back.

If you ever inherited money or property, take a step forward.

If you had to rely primarily on public transportation, take one step back.

If you were ever stopped or questioned by the police because of your race, ethnicity, gender, or sexual orientation, take one step back.

If you were ever afraid of violence because of your race, ethnicity, gender, or sexual orientation, take one step back.

If you were generally able to avoid places that were dangerous, take one step forward.

If you ever felt uncomfortable about a joke related to your race, ethnicity, gender, or sexual orientation, take one step back.

If you were ever a victim of violence related to your race, ethnicity, gender, or sexual orientation, take one step back.

If your parents did not grow up in the United States, take one step back.

If your parents told you that you could be anything you wanted to be, take one step forward.