

ACTIVITY | Privilege Walk



GOAL | To understand privilege and explore the ways it is experienced based on being a member of various social identity groups to appreciate the complexity of individual differences and the effect they might have on interactions with others.



RELEVANT FOR

- Executive
- Middle Manager
- Supervisor



DESCRIPTION | The following activity has been slightly adapted from deloreshuerta.org. This activity was adapted for Lake Land College by the Diversity Education Task Force. The purpose of the Diversity Education Task Force (DETF) is to educate, advocate, and celebrate diversity including making recommendations to the college administration to create a more inclusive campus environment.

NOTE: This is a very “high risk” activity that requires trust building and safety for participants; be mindful about whether there is sufficient trust to conduct the activity. Otherwise, the activity can create resentment and hurt that can inhibit further sharing and openness.

Conduct an activity with your unit, team, and/or division to provide participants with an opportunity to understand the intricacies of privilege and explore the ways that it is enjoyed based on being members of social identity groups in the United States. Peggy McIntosh, Associate Director of the Wellesley College Center for Research on Women, describes white privilege as “an invisible package of unearned assets, which I can count on cashing in each day, but about which I was meant to remain oblivious. White privilege is like an invisible weightless knapsack of special provisions, maps, passports, code books, visas, clothes, tools, and blank checks” (McIntosh, 1989).

Please note that this exercise is not meant to make anyone feel guilty or ashamed of their privilege or lack of privilege related to any social identity categories. Rather, the exercise seeks to highlight the fact that everyone has **SOME** privilege, even as some people have more privilege than others. By illuminating them, privileges can be used individually and collectively to work for social justice. 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 life.

Preparation: Provide enough physical space so people can line up and move forward ten steps or backward ten steps.

DIRECTIONS:

1. Ask participants to form a straight line across the room about an arm's length apart, leaving space in front of and behind themselves.
2. Read the "Introduction" statement from above to provide context for the exercise.
3. State the following:
Listen to the following statements and follow the instructions given. For example, when I read "If you have blue eyes, take one step forward," only people with blue eyes will move and everyone else will stand still. Each step should be an average length step. This activity should be done in silence and if anyone feels uncomfortable stepping forward or backward after any statement I read, then please stay where you are, but remember what the statement was. This is an introspective exercise, and it's important for you to understand how privilege affects your life, but it is not designed to make you share things that you don't wish to share.
4. Read the statements one at a time allowing time for participants to take a step after each.
5. Start the question/answer session by going around the room and having each person share one word that captures how they are feeling right now. If they do not want to share, have them say, "pass."
6. Process the activity with the following questions:
 - Would anyone like to share more about their feelings?
 - How did it feel to be one of the students on the "back" side of the line?
 - How did it feel to be one of the students on the "front" side of the line?
 - Did anyone think they had experienced an average amount of privilege, but it turned out to be more or less than they thought?
 - If anyone was alone on one side, how did that feel?
 - Was anyone always on one side of the line? If yes, how did that feel?
 - Were there certain sentences that were more impactful than others?

**MORE INFO**

[Diversity Toolkit: A Guide to Discussing Identity, Power and Privilege](#)
[Advancing Inclusivity by Caucusing](#)

Sources used by DeloresHuerto.org:

Privilege Walk Activity originally created by SUNY Albany

Young, Tira J. The privilege walk workshop: Learning more about privilege in today's society.
www.collegesuccess1.com



White Privilege Checklist

The following are examples of ways White individuals have privilege because they are White. Please read the list and place a check next to the privileges that apply to you or that you have encountered. At the end, try to list at least two more ways you have privilege based on your race.

1. I can arrange to be in the company of people of my race most of the time.
2. I can go shopping alone most of the time, pretty well assured that I will not be followed or harassed.
3. I can turn on the television and see people of my race widely represented.
4. When I am told about our national heritage or about civilization, I am shown that people of my color made it what it is.
5. I can be sure that my children will be given curricula materials that testify to the existence of their race.
6. I can go in to a haircare shop and find someone who can deal with my hair.
7. Whether I use credit cards or cash, I can count on my skin color not to work against the appearance of financial responsibility.
8. I am not made acutely aware that my shape, bearing, or clothing will be taken as reflection on my race.
9. I can worry about racism without being seen as self-interested or self-seeking.
10. I can take a job or enroll in a college with an affirmative action policy without having peers assume I got it because of my race.
11. I can be late to a meeting without having the lateness reflect on my race.
12. I can choose public accommodation without fearing that people of my race cannot get in or will be mistreated.
13. I am never asked to speak for all of the people of my racial group.
14. I can be pretty sure if I ask to talk with the person in charge, I will be facing a person of my race.
15. If a traffic cop pulls me over, I can be sure I haven't been singled out because of my race.
16. I can easily buy picture books, greeting cards, dolls, toys, and children's magazines featuring people of my race.
17. I can choose blemish cover or bandages and have them more or less match my skin tone.





18. I can do well in a challenging situation without being called a credit to my race.
19. I can walk into a classroom and know I will not be the only member of my race.
20. I can enroll in a class at college and be sure that the majority of my professors will be of my race.

Racial privilege is only one form of privilege. What are other examples of privilege? (e.g., privilege based on gender, sexual orientation, class, and religion). Can you think of ways one might have privilege based on these factors? (e.g., that you do not have to worry about being verbally or physically harassed because of your sexual orientation; or you can be sure that your religious holiday will be acknowledged and represented in store displays, classroom discussions, etc.). Please list these forms of privilege.