

Voices through Water

The Creative and Activist Methodologies Toolkit

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Privilege walk

Activist

A privilege walk is a structured activity, often used in workshops or educational settings, designed to help participants understand how social privileges and disadvantages influence their lives. It involves participants standing in a line and taking steps forward or backward based on statements about their experiences and characteristics, revealing how different groups may have varying advantages or disadvantages.



Target group

Young people 15+

Min. 3



Time needed

1.5-2 hours



Tips for the trainer

Sensitivity

The activity can be emotionally challenging, especially to participants who did make no or only a few steps forward. It is crucial to create a safe and supportive environment or offer a one-to-one conversation to every participant beforehand, if they do not want to share their feelings or experiences after the exercise with the whole group.

Ground Rules

Clear ground rules, including respecting others' experiences and listening without judgment, are essential.

Debriefing

Ask the participants before the Reflection how they want to share their experiences during the exercise. A thorough debriefing session is crucial to help participants process them and discuss the broader implications of privilege and power within our society.



Environment

A room or a space big enough for all participants



Materials

Prepared statements



Alternative

Alternatives like "The Power House Activity" are available for those seeking a less emotionally intense approach.

The activity can also be done with closed eyes until all statements have been read.



Source

Written by project participant Anastas Krusińska and edited by Südwind, seen on various awareness, inclusivity and non-discrimination projects. Some sources:

· <https://leadershipfordiversity.eu/ehub-post/privilege-walk/>

· https://www.evoves.com.au/the-privilege-walk/?fbclid=IwY2xjawLbXCtleHRuA2FlbQlXMAbicmlkETBsTkpEamphcVAzYk5qRU5TAR4pnPFX6lRg7Q9H4nwKmVV836EKP5KM_jCkAxF4Uo8euqSWhAupdlDyBPLJLQ_aem_ZKc-BdRIIDFBBad3OnfdNg

Additional source:

<https://students.dartmouth.edu/opal/education/introduction-power-privilege-and-social-justice>

Objective/aim

- To explore the concept of privilege in our society and its impact on individuals and groups.
- To promote self-awareness and understanding of one's own position within social structures.
- To encourage empathy and inclusivity by highlighting the different experiences of individuals.
- To initiate conversations about power dynamics and social justice.

Step by step instructions

Step 1 - 20 min

Set the ground rules for respectful communication and equal participation before you start with the exercise. Involve participants in setting these rules (e.g. by using the brainstorming method or creating a group agreement - see another method in this Toolkit: Group agreement). This may help participants to remember and accept the ground rules more easily.

It is important to create a safer space before the start of the exercise and to create awareness of the possibility of negative experiences during the exercise.

Offer the participants that they do not have to participate and may step out at any time if they feel uncomfortable with the situation.

Step 2 - 30 min - Introduction

Provide an introduction to the concept of privilege in our society, what it means and how it gives power to specific groups/individuals and how it affects specific groups/individuals.

That privileges are advantages and favours that individuals receive because of their membership of a social group and that privileges are often the result of systematic targeting and/or marginalisation of another social group. Give examples for social groups (e.g. based on gender, race, social class, religion, etc.).

Step 3 - 5 min - Setup

Participants form a line, facing forward.

Step 4 - Statements

Explain that you will read out statements and that participants shall take a step forward if the statement applies to them. The facilitator starts to read statements that describe situations or circumstances, some reflecting privilege and others reflecting disadvantage.

Step 5 - 20 min - Movement

Participants step forward if the statement applies to them and step back if it does not.

Step 6 - 5 min - Observation

Participants are encouraged to observe the distribution of people as the walk progresses, noticing how groups may cluster together or spread out.

Step 7 - 30 min or more - Debriefing/Reflection

A discussion follows, allowing participants to share their reflections on the experience and the concepts of privilege and disadvantage.