Critical Skills for White Change Agents on Campus:
Promising Practices, Doing Our Self-Work

Kathy Obear, Ed.D, Alliance for Change Consulting and Coaching www.drkathyobear.com

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Panning/Observing Group Dynamics with an Inclusion Lens

Observers ~ Use the following prompts as you use an Inclusion Lens to observe and track/pan group dynamics:

1. What differences are present in the group? Which group memberships? and how many from various groups?

2. Who is talking?

3. Who initiates the topics?

4. Whose ideas get discussed in-depth? Whose ideas don't get much discussion and/or are discounted?

5. Who is quiet? Doesn't speak as often as others?

6. Who interrupts others? Who gets interrupted?

7. How much air-time do people take?

8. Who do people look at when they are talking?

9. Who has eye contact with whom while others are talking?

10. Who engages in side conversations?

11. How do decisions get made?

12. Who brings up issues of inclusion and diversity?

13. How do people respond when different issues of inclusion are raised?

14. As you notice interpersonal dynamics that are not inclusive, wonder: Is this an isolated incident or a possible pattern of experience?

15. What issues of inclusion are not being discussed?

Adapted from materials developed by Elsie Y. Cross Associates, Inc. 1994 Delyte Frost, et al. Tracking™

What are Your Inclusion Values and Intentions?

- create greater inclusion
- leave people feeling whole
- engage in respectful dialogue
- do no harm
- "go with the flow;" trust the process
- deepen learning and growth
- meet the people "where they are" without judgment
- use the triggering moment to deepen understanding
- relate in, connect to the person
- create space for honest, authentic dialogue; sharing of feelings, perceptions
- invite people to learn from the situation
- model the social justice behaviors you espouse: authenticity, empathy, self-reflection, engagement…
- deepen understanding across differences
- identify deeper issues fueling feelings, perceptions and behaviors
- create safety for the expression of differing viewpoints
- treat others with respect and dignity
- encourage more people to engage in the dialogue
- support people to disagree with each other in respectful ways
- model effective recovery skills after making an inappropriate comment or when your behavior results in negative impact
- identify inappropriate behaviors and explore the negative impact
- interrupt unproductive, inappropriate behaviors and group dynamics
- build a "bridge" and a connection with the other person
- encourage identity development and growth
- demonstrate compassion and empathy

Have You Ever Had These Less Productive Intentions?

- win the argument
- get even; get them back
- to be right; prove the other person wrong
- to prove you are competent, smart
- assert your power and authority
- gain status and prestige; be admired
- be in control
- intimidate the other person
- "put them in their place," shut them down
- punish the other person
- embarrass or put down the other person
- make them feel the pain and hurt you feel
- change the other person's views, feelings or behaviors
- to make people learn
- trick and "out fox" the other person
- avoid confrontation and conflict
- keep the conversation "under control"
- avoid intense emotions: in self and others
- make everyone feel happy and harmonious
- avoid feeling or being viewed as "incompetent"
- control how others feel about you
- To seen as a "good one," an ally
- use the current opportunity to "right the wrongs" you experienced in your past
- change the other person to account for times you either didn't or couldn't change oppressive people earlier in your life
- ignore them
- seek approval of others
- to be liked, to fit in

Authentic Dialogue Prompts

Directions ~ With your partner, share and _relate_ to each other as you discuss:

1. Share an example of a time you spoke up and effectively engaged someone whose comment or behavior was biased or misinformed: How did you feel? What did you do/say?

2. When are you at your best as an ally or change agent?

3. What are some of your fears as you engage issues of race and racism?

4. What biases or stereotypes do you still notice within yourself?

5. When and where do you get stuck? How do you feel when you are stuck and less effective?

6. What would feel supportive from colleagues? To help you continue to grow and develop skills?

7. When have you:
    a. Felt fear when interacting with people of color?
    b. Felt fear when interacting with whites?
    c. Felt guilt or shame?
    d. Felt anger towards people of color?
    e. Felt anger towards whites?

8. What are 5+ ways you see people benefiting from white privilege?

9. What are some examples of how whites have intentionally used white privilege to help dismantle racism?

10. When have you seen others use white privilege to gain an advantage or greater access?

11. What racist thoughts do you still have?

12. What are 1-2 examples (over the past 1-2 years) when you have acted based on some racial stereotypes or racist thoughts?

13. When do you remember realizing that **_whites_** believed they were superior to people of color, people who were biracial/multiracial? (smarter, more organized, better leaders, more competent, etc.)

14. When do you remember realizing **_that you_** believed whites were superior to people of color, people who were biracial/multiracial? (smarter, more organized, better leaders, more competent, etc.)

Common Racist Behaviors and Attitudes of Many of Whites

Directions: review these common group dynamics:

a. Check-off any dynamics which you have observed or heard a credible story about.
b. Make a note next to the dynamics that you have personally experienced, felt, or done.
c. Add any additional common patterns/dynamics you have witnessed or experienced.

<u>Some/Many Whites Tend to (consciously and unconsciously):</u>

1. believe they have "earned" what they have, rather than acknowledge the extensive white privilege and unearned advantages they receive; believe that if people of color just worked harder…

2. not notice the daily indignities that people of color experience; deny them and rationalize them away with PLEs (perfectly logical explanations)

3. work to maintain the status quo and protect the advantages and privileges they receive

4. believe that white cultural norms, practices and values are superior and better

5. internalize the negative stereotypes about people of color and believe that whites are smarter and superior to people of color

6. want people of color to conform and assimilate to white cultural norms and practices

7. accept and feel safer around people of color who have assimilated and are "closer to white"

8. blame people of color for the barriers and challenges they experience; believe that if they "worked harder" they could "pull themselves up by their bootstraps"

9. believe that people of color are not competent and are only hired/promoted to fill quotas

10. interrupt and talk over people of color

11. resent taking direction from a person of color

12. dismiss and minimize frustrations of people of color and categorize the person raising issues as militant, angry, having an "attitude," working their agenda, not a team player...

13. focus on their "good intent" as whites, rather than on the negative impact of their behavior

14. focus on how much progress we have made, rather than on how much more needs to change

15. want people of color to "get over it" and move on quickly

16. get defensive when people of color express their frustrations with current organizational and societal dynamics

17. "walk on eggshells" and act more distant and formal with people of color

18. segregate themselves from people of color and rarely develop authentic relationships across race

19. exaggerate the level of intimacy they have with individual people of color

20. fear that they will be seen and "found out" as a racist, having racial prejudice

21. focus on themselves as an individual (I'm not racist; I'm a good white), and refuse to acknowledge the cultural and institutional racism people of color experience daily

22. pressure and punish whites who actively work to dismantle racism to conform and collude with white racism; criticize, gossip about, and find fault with white change agents

23. expect people of color to be the "diversity expert" and take the lead in raising and addressing racism as their "second (unpaid) job"

24. minimize, under-value, ignore, overlook and discount the talents, competencies and contributions of people of color

25. rephrase and reword the comments of people of color

26. ask people of color to repeat what they have just said

27. assume the white teacher/coach/facilitator/employee, etc., is in charge/the leader; assume people of color are in service roles

28. rationalize away racist treatment of people of color as individual incidents or the result of something the person of color did/failed to do

29. dismiss the racist experiences of people of color with comments such as: That happens to me too...You're too sensitive...That happened because of _____, it has nothing to do with race!

30. judge a person of color as over-reacting and too emotional when they are responding to the cumulative impact of multiple recent racist incidents

31. accuse people of color of "playing the race card" whenever they challenge racist policies and practices; instead of exploring the probability of negative differential impact based on race, or that racist attitudes and beliefs are operating

32. if confronted by a person of color, shut down and focus on what to avoid saying or doing in the future, rather than engaging and learning from the interaction

33. look to people of color for direction, education, coaching on how to act & what not to do

34. compete with other whites to be "the good white:" the best ally, the one people of color let into their circle, etc.

35. if a white person makes a racist comment or action, aggressively confront them and pile on the feedback to distance from them and prove who is a better ally

36. seek approval, validation, and recognition from people of color

37. if confronted by a person of color, view it as an "attack" and focus on and critique HOW they engaged me, not my original comments or behaviors

38. disengage if feel any anxiety or discomfort

39. avoid confronting other whites on their racist attitudes and behaviors

40. when trying to help people of color, feel angry if they don't enthusiastically appreciate the help

41. believe there is one "right" way, meaning "my way" or the "white way"

More productive approaches:

42. track patterns of differential treatment of people of color and intervene to stop inappropriate actions and educate others

43. continually learn more about the experiences of people of color and racism

44. recognize when people of color might be reacting out of cumulative impact, and offer space to talk about issues and their experiences

45. analyze policies and practices to assess any differential impact on people of color and intervene to create change

46. constantly track daily organizational activities to ensure fairness, respect, and inclusion for all people with respect to group dynamics, communication, task assignments, professional development opportunities, decision-making, conflict management, mentoring, networking, etc.