

HANDOUT 1: STAGES OF INTERSECTIONAL IDENTITY DEVELOPMENT



'HAVE' IDENTITY DEVELOPMENT

Stage 1: CONTACT

Unaware of own intersectional identities; for example does not think of oneself as "white" or 'female' or 'heterosexual', but as "normal." Tendency to view prejudice as "individual acts of meanness" rather than as part of an institutionalized system, and typically does not recognize or acknowledge system privileges. Naïve curiosity or fear of people who are 'different', usually based on stereotypes.

- Generally, believes the world is fair and everyone has equal opportunities.
- Unaware of their intersectional identities, and believes their's is a universal way of being that everyone should ascribe to.
- Tries not to see difference; "I'm colour-blind." "Men, women, whatever - we're all the same"; 'Social class is a thing of the past nowadays'
- Messages of internalized superiority go unchallenged.

Narrative: "I don't see difference(s)/ Talking about this stuff brings disunity"

Stage 2: DISINTEGRATION

Awareness of privilege increase as a result of personal experiences. Common emotional responses to this new information include shame, guilt, denial, anger, depression, and withdrawal. May attempt to persuade others to abandon prejudicial thinking.

- Conscious but conflicted acknowledgement of 'Have' privilege
- Feels caught between different lived realities.

Narrative: "I feel bad for being privileged (white, male, heterosexual, middle class etc)"

Stage 3: REINTEGRATION

May feel pressured by others to "not notice" privilege. Feelings of guilt and denial are transformed into fear and anger toward people in have not groups. Chooses to avoid the issue of prejudice, if possible, rather than struggling to define a non-oppressor identity. The pressure to conform to the systemic norms of society are strong and so the temptation is to slip 'backwards', switching between 'blaming the victim' and/or distancing themselves from the 'have' collective claiming 'I don't do those things'. May identify with some other marginalised group.

- Guilt and anxiety transformed into hostility and anger.
- Feels like there are no right answers- to be a 'have' is to be wrong.
- Selective attention to stereotype confirming information.
- Percentage wise *privileged groups live in the reintegration stage because the disintegration stage is the most painful and difficult to navigate.*

Narrative: "It's not my fault I'm white/I have a black friend/child/relative etc"

Stage 4: PSEUDO-INDEPENDENCE

Individual is abandoning beliefs in privileged 'have' superiority. Has an intellectual understanding of the unfairness of systemic privileges and recognizes personal responsibility for dismantling oppression. May choose to distance oneself from other 'have's', and actively seek out people of marginalised groups to help them develop understanding.

- Still **thinks** about systemic issues rather than **feeling**.
- Depends on people of marginal groups to define intersectional identities
- Sees racism/sexism etc, but may still believe that if those groups worked harder prejudice wouldn't affect them. Struggling to be an effective ally.
- Compares oppression: "my people suffered too."
- Continues to exhibit a sense of internalized superiority.

Narrative: "How can I be white and anti-racist?"

Stage 5: IMMERSION/EMERSION

Actively seeking to redefine what being a 'have' means. Needs support from other anti-oppression 'have's' who have asked similar questions. Focus is on developing a positive 'have' identity not based on assumed superiority. Takes pride in active anti-oppression stance.

- Takes more responsibility for systemic oppressive practices and privilege
- Move from trying to change people in 'have-not' positions, to trying to change oppression and self.
- May try to immerse themselves in communities of 'have-nots'
- Critical of themselves and others

Narrative: "Who am I as a 'have'?" "What does it really mean to be one of the 'have's' in this country?"

AUTONOMY – Has internalized a positive 'have' intersectional identity. Actively anti-oppression within own sphere of influence. Development of intersectional identity is not static, continues to be open to new information and ongoing self-examination. Able to work effectively in multiracial setting in "beloved community."

- A conscious use of privilege and willingness to take action
- Values true diversity and difference across and within intersectional identities.
- Seeking and accepting feedback from colleagues of marginalised groups
- Understand that oppression is systemic and historically rooted.

Narrative: "I have a positive 'have' anti-oppression identity. My actions are aligned with my values. I am committed and will continue to question, to seek and to learn.