

Identity Signs

Large Group – 201 – High Trust – 40 mins – szp.guide/identitysigns

Materials

- Identity signs
- Tape or tacks to hang the signs

Setup

- Hang up the identity signs around the room
- Ensure the room is set up in such a way that participants can easily move around the room to stand under the different signs

Facilitator Framing

- Hang up the identity signs ideally, before the workshop begins so they are part of the space from the very beginning. If you think they'll be a distraction, hang another piece of paper in front of each one.
- This activity is likely to be quite different with every group that you work with, allow the conversations that happen in the pairs/small groups to go for as long (or short) as you like, generally we recommend until the energy feels like it hits a lull and bring it back to large group.

Goals & Learning Outcomes

- To create a space for participants to talk about their experiences and their identities in a more personal way than they might otherwise.
- To provide an opportunity for participants to learn directly from each other.
- To highlight that people with similar identities can experience different levels of salience, self-awareness, and can be differently impacted by their intersecting identities
- To talk about how we experience our identities on a day-to-day basis
- To highlight how everyone may experience pain, ostracism, or discrimination, yet feel it within the context of different identities

Process Steps

1. Frame the activity: “We are going to be doing an activity now that requires us to move around the room. I’m going to read a statement and then you’re going to answer that statement by placing yourself under one of the signs that I’ve hung up around the room. The statements

relate to your experience of these identities. We'll then have a chance to talk in pairs and debrief with the large group."

2. Invite participants to stand up and prepare to move around the room. Let participants know if anyone has any mobility concerns or needs to sit down once they get to a new place in the room they are totally welcome to grab a seat near by and do that.
3. Read the first prompt, provide time for participants to move around to their different signs. Invite them to check out where the group is standing. At this point you the facilitator have a choice. Option 1: Invite the group to connect with others who stood under that sign and discuss what came up for them when they were thinking through the statement. Then after 2-4 minutes of pairs or small group conversation (if you're working with a large group have them talk to 1-2 other people at their sign) bring it back to the large group and ask if anyone would like to share with the large group why they are where they are. Option 2: is to simply start with the large group debrief by inviting participants to share into the large group some thoughts behind their choice. Option 1 creates more conversation, option 2 moves more quickly.
4. Read the second prompt and repeat the process.
5. After you've finished reading the prompts that you want the group to work through invite them back to their seats.
6. Depending on the time you've allotted for the activity, you may also want to debrief the activity after the fact.

Statements/Prompts

The part of my identity that I am most aware of on a daily basis is_____.

The part of my identity that I am the least aware of on a daily basis is_____.

The part of my identity that was most emphasized or important in my family growing up was _____.

The part of my identity that I wish I knew more about is _____.

The part of my identity that makes me feel discriminated against is _____.

The part of my identity that provides me the most privilege is _____.

The part of my identity that I believe is the most misunderstood by others is _____.

The part of my identity that I feel is difficult to discuss with others who identify differently is _____.

Debrief questions

- What was that activity like?
- What did you notice about the way that people were distributed around the room that struck you?

- Were there any identity categories that you wish had existed but were not options?
- Anything else you'd like to add before we move on from the activity?

Wrap-up

To close up this activity it is good to summarize some of the major points that were brought up in the debrief and/or to thank everyone for their honesty/vulnerability in what they were willing to name or share in the actual activity itself. Even if some people don't verbally share, moving under/near the signs may bring up a lot of emotion or may take a lot of courage; therefore, it is good to highlight your appreciation of the group's participation.

Make it your own

You can orient this activity around a specific subset of identities so as to generate more in-depth discussion about one area or subset of social justice work. You could do this activity around identity signs related to sexuality and include signs like: sexual history, sexual interest, sexual orientation, gender identity, attractions to others, etc. This is also an activity that you can include your own participation or not. If it is a small group and it would feel negatively voyeuristic to not participate, then you may want to consider answering the questions as well.

Notes

This activity is labeled as "high trust" because it provides a lot of opportunity for personal and deep sharing and participants often need to feel comfortable, safe, and ready to share personal stories and experiences with each other. Without pre-established trust, participants may not be ready/willing to do this.

Depending on the group and the way folks learn/take in information, you may want project onto a screen the statements that you are asking as you go along so that participants can read them. We would not necessarily recommend providing participants with the statement sheet because they may be distracted by thinking about the statements that come later.

Sexual Orientation

Race



Gender Identity

Class

Biological Sex

National Origin

Immigration Status