

FAST FACTS



10-20
People



30
Minutes



\$0



Medium-
High Risk
Level

Privilege Walk – Class

Adapted with permission from *Teaching for Diversity and Social Justice*

Purpose of Activity: This program primarily focuses on social class and the components that comprise class disparities. The topics include familial background, education, race/ethnicity, citizenship, gender, sexual orientation, and ability. Through indicating whether an individual identifies with certain statements, it is possible for participants to recognize the privileges that they have been granted and to learn about the backgrounds of their peers.

Objectives/Learning Outcomes: After participating in this activity, participants will be able to recognize the inequalities that exist in society, especially relating to social class. It will help participants to acknowledge their privileges, contextualize their own experiences, and learn about their peers. Through the final discussion and processing, participants will be able to apply this activity to their lives to support social awareness.

Materials Needed:

- Open space (may need to move furniture as reflected in set up and clean up times)
- Facilitation Guide (see below)

Ground Rules:

- Be fully present and participate at your own comfort level – challenge by choice.
- Follow up - What does it mean to be “fully present”?
- Follow up - What does “challenge by choice” mean?
- Push yourself outside of your comfort zone – the most learning happens when we are a little bit uncomfortable.
- Listen respectfully, share air time, and encourage others to participate.
- It’s ok for us all to be at different places with the things we discuss today.
- Show respect for one another’s beliefs, values, and experiences.
- Respect and maintain privacy.

Disclaimer:

- If as facilitators you are not a member of the subordinated group (low SES) focused on in this program, be sure to acknowledge that. Frame the conversation that you do not understand what it means to be of a lower socioeconomic status from personal experience, nor are you an expert because this is the topic of the program. You are simply trying to be an ally by doing education on the topic.
- If someone DOES attend the program who is of the subordinated group, be sure not to single them out for the “low SES perspective,” stare at them to judge their reaction, or basically put them on the spot. They should be treated like every other



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student, and invite everyone to share/participate as much as she/he/ze is comfortable.

Facilitation Guide:

• **Introduction**

- Thank the participants for coming to the program and introduce the program summary and learning outcomes.
- Establish that this is an activity that may trigger certain emotions.

• **Learning Community Guidelines**

- Establish learning community guidelines in order to create a safe learning environment, since the participants will be revealing personal details about themselves.

• **Instructions**

- Have participants form a single line, standing shoulder to shoulder.
- Ask everyone to listen carefully and maintain silence throughout the exercise.
- Tell participants that you are going to read off a series of statements.
- Tell participants that if the statement is true for them, they should take a step forward. And if the statement is not true for them, they should take a step backwards. If a statement is not relevant or they do not wish to respond, they may stand still.
- After each statement, allow participants a few seconds to note who is standing where. Then read off the next statement.

• **Statements**

- If you were taken to art galleries, museums, sporting events or plays by your parents, take one step forward.
- If your school was conducted in a language that was not your first language, take one step back.
- If there were more than 50 books in your house when you grew up, take one step forward.
- If one of your parents was unemployed or laid off, not by choice, take one step back.
- If you did not have to have a job to contribute to the family finances, take one step forward.
- If you attended private school or summer camp, take one step forward.
- If you were raised in a single parent household, take one step back.
- If your parents or guardians attended college, take one step forward.
- If you were raised in an area where there was crime or drug activity, please take one step back.
- If you have ever inherited money or property, take one step forward.



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- If you ever had to rely primarily on public transportation, take one step back.
- If your family ever had to skip a meal because there was not enough money to buy food when you were growing up, please take one step back.
- If your family ever had to move because they could not afford to pay the rent or mortgage, please take one step back.
- If your family took vacations out of your hometown growing up, take a step forward.
- If you were often embarrassed or ashamed of your clothes or house while you were growing up, please take one step back.

Take a look around you. Notice who is behind you, in front of you, and next to you--where are your friends? Think about what your place in this spectrum means to you. As you think about these things, you can have a seat. We're now going to take a few minutes to discuss this experience.

Processing Questions:

After all participants are seated, the facilitator should lead the group in discussion. The questions listed below are recommended. Be sure to allow time after asking the question for participants to raise their hands.

- How did this activity make you feel?
- What did you observe as you were doing the activity?
- Did anything surprise you?
- What have you learned from this activity?
- Has this activity changed your perspective of others?

Final points to summarize:

It is important to recognize that everyone has a unique experience in life. There are some people who have been more privileged than you and some that have been less privileged. By recognizing this fact, we are able to avoid judging others. We can also see what privileges society has given us, and/or what we have overcome to be where we are. It is important to be grateful for the experiences that have been given to us, but to also recognize the societal structures that may have contributed to these. Although it is important not to talk about the specific experiences that were shared outside of this group, talking about what you learned is the key to helping to make a change in society.

Possible facilitation issues:

- Participants may begin to feel uncomfortable with sharing and may choose to sit out. Make sure that all participants are aware that this is all right.
- Talking about privilege and personal experiences may bring up strong emotions. Be sure to tell participants that this is a normal response and be willing to let them share.