

Difference and Bullying

Defining Diversity

- Diversity is the presence of difference, especially social difference.
- Dimensions of diversity often include gender, race, ability status, religion, social class, age, and sexual orientation. However, it is limiting to assume these are the *only* aspects of diversity. Diversity is about the uniqueness of every individual – young, old, black, white, slow learners, fast learners, introverts, extroverts, controlling people, easy-going people, scholars, athletes, liberals and conservatives, etc..

Embracing Diversity

- Embracing diversity means creating equal opportunity, value, and respect for all people.
- Embracing diversity ensures that we value differences in every person and create inclusive environments where everyone feels valued and respected.

Challenges to Embracing Diversity

- Biases are deeply rooted within us. We are constantly given messages from friends, family, teachers, books, media, and other sources in society about what is right or wrong. These messages shape our perceptions of and responses to people and the world. What we learn and experience gives us a subjective point of view, known as bias. Our biases serve as filtering lenses for making sense of information, experiences, and even people. However, if we allow ourselves to prejudge others, or assume others are “wrong” just because they are different, then our biases become harmful.
- People often fail to embrace diversity simply because they do not understand some differences or have never been exposed to certain types of diversity.
- Other times, people might fail to embrace diversity because they are afraid of or uncomfortable around different ideas or people. Diverse people or ideas might make us question our own ideas or identities, or it might make the world seem uncertain or scary.

Diversity and Bullying

- Bullying based on diversity, often called *bias-based bullying*, is bullying related to prejudices youth absorb from their wider social community about the value of diversity.
- One factor that consistently predicts bullying victimization is being different from the larger peer group. Youth who are different are often bullied because they have characteristics perceived to deviate from the normative standards of the larger peer group.
- Students who are most likely to be victims of bullying include, individuals who are physically or mentally disabled (particularly those with disabilities involving poor social skills), intellectually gifted, racial or ethnic minorities, overweight, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, or from a culture or religion that differs from the main school.
- Surveys have documented that biased-based bullying is actually on the rise.
- Student bullying is strongly linked to school climate, including how openly difference and diversity are discussed and the value placed on respect for diversity and inclusion.

Preventing Bias-Based Bullying

- Help students understand why words and messages hurt.
- Create inclusive classroom and school environments where everyone feels included.
 - Reflect on the school's current climate of diversity and bullying.
 - Reflect on your own attitude towards diversity and bullying.
 - Model inclusive and welcoming behavior for students.
 - Engage in activities and discussions with students about diversity.
- Have open and honest discussions about diversity and bullying with students.
 - Acknowledge that prejudice exists in society and can lead to bias-based bullying.
 - Make sure students know where the school and you stand on the issue of diversity.
- Empower students by listening to them, involving them in creating solutions for bullying, and treating them as experts on bullying.
- Support those who are bullied by accepting their account of the incident, communicating your support, acknowledging their feelings, and stressing this was not their fault.

Skills for Facilitating Diversity Discussions

- Consider your own role in the discussion:
 - Leader - sets the example and becomes a role model
 - Team Builder - pulls students into a unified team
 - Peace Keeper - acts as a mediator
 - Pot Stirrer - brings controversy out in the open
 - Devil's Advocate - raises issues for better understanding
 - Cheerleader - praises people for doing great
 - Counselor - provides intimate feedback
- Encourage elaboration of ideas:
 - "What do others think?" or "What do you think?"
 - "I've heard from X, Y, and Z so far ... are there any other thoughts?"
 - "And what else?"
 - Silence— gives the students a chance to think. Longer periods of silence can be used to force people to talk due to the uncomfortable nature of the silence in a group.
- Help interpret student comments and clarify their thoughts.
 - Point out words vs. tone, or intent vs. wording.
 - Paraphrase a student's message so you can ensure clarity of understanding.
- Critically consider the points of view offered in discussion.
 - Look for multiple POV; interject new POV if one view monopolizes conversation.
 - Ask for dissenting opinions.
 - Look for similarity or differences among the discussion points.
- Depersonalize the discussion. Do not allow students to make personal attacks or take the discussion points personally; this will create a defensive climate.
- Sense the group energy. Take a break if conversation ceases to be calm and respectful.
- Remember to breathe and relax.

Activities

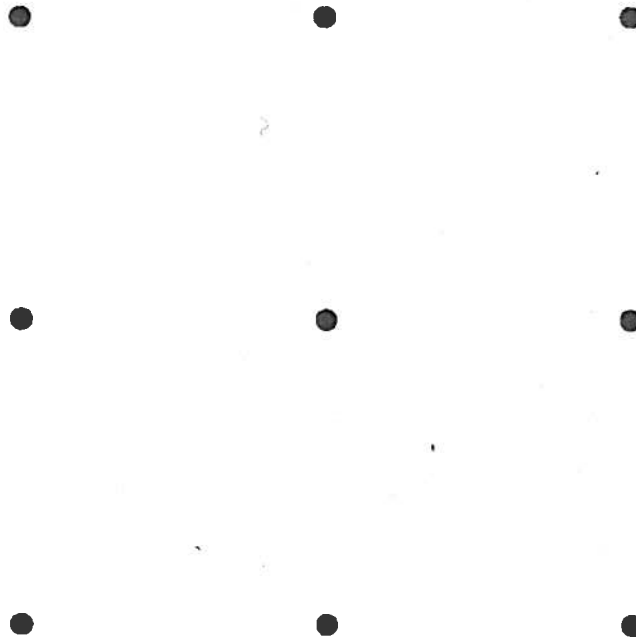
The following are example activities that encourage students to think about diversity and difference. The activities are broken into two categories: (a) facilitating diversity discussions, (b) encouraging the development of empathy by giving students an experience of being marginalized or rejected. These are all activities that we have used with our own college students, so they might need to be adapted to work with elementary, middle school, or high school students.

Facilitating Diversity Discussions

Activity 1: Connect the Dots

Goal: To demonstrate that we often limit our perspectives and choices. Use the activity to facilitate a conversation with students about how our limited perspectives influence our attitudes towards diverse others.

Instructions: Pass out a copy of the DOTS picture. Ask students to connect all of the dots with *ONLY four straight lines*. Do NOT lift your pencil off the paper. Do NOT retrace any line. Lines may cross if necessary. Ask anyone who figures out the solution to turn their paper over.

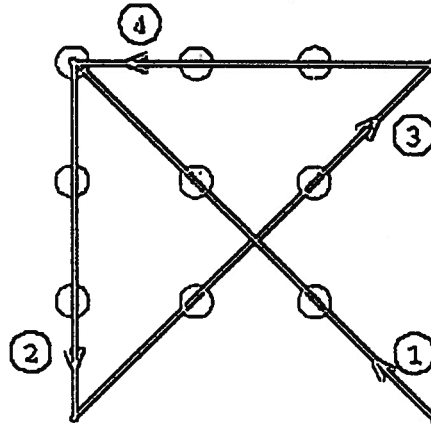


After about 5 minutes, ask if any student has found the solution, which requires drawing a line that overshoots all of the dots:

Discussion:

- Share the solution with the class. Invite anyone who figured it out to describe their process for finding the solution.
- Why is it that most of us did not think of going outside the boundaries to solve the problem?
- To solve the problem, we had to get outside of our usual way of thinking— outside of the box we put ourselves in. We had to literally draw outside the lines. This is what is required of us when we interact with people who are different from us. We have to look at other ways of “thinking about thinking.”
- Drawing outside the lines is very difficult because we are so used to our own way of thinking and our own point of view that it is hard to see other points of view. To successfully interact with people from different backgrounds and different cultures, we must learn to look at the world from many points of view.

Solution



Activity #2: Diversity Wheel

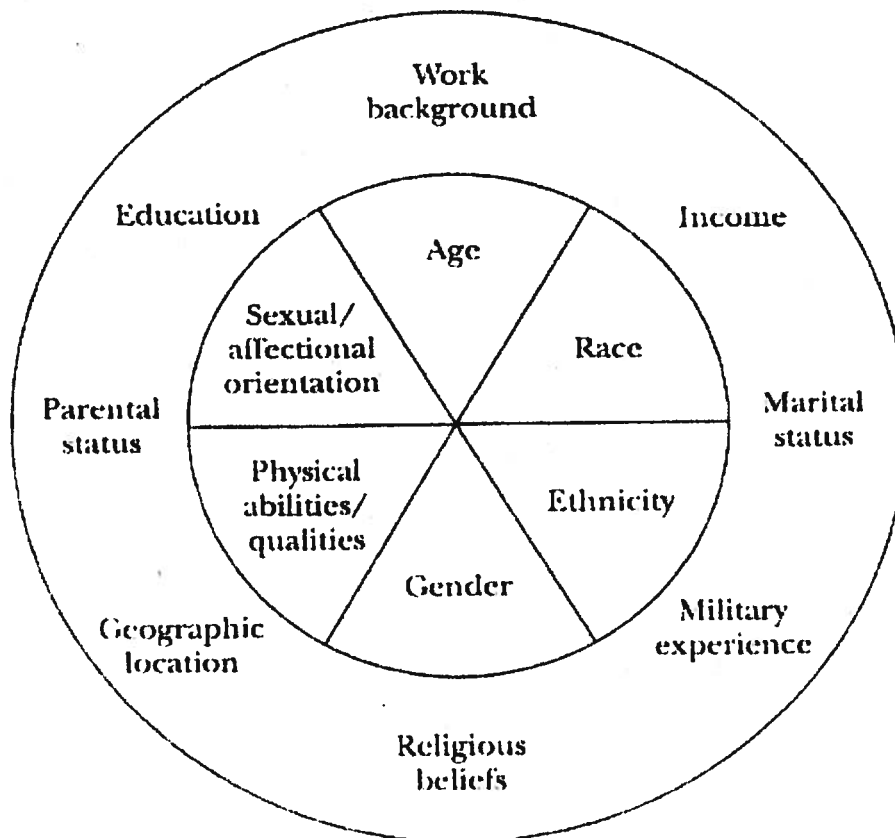
Goal: The Diversity Wheel activity engages students in the process of identifying what they consider to be the most important dimensions of their own identity. This activity highlights the multiple dimensions of our identities. It addresses the importance of individuals self-defining their identities and challenging stereotypes.

Instructions: Have a conversation with students about what diversity looks like, then distribute copies of the Diversity Wheel handout. Explain that the inner “wedges” of the diversity wheel are characteristics that are particularly important to our identity, whereas the outer wheel represents characteristics that are still part of our identity but less important. Ask students to follow these steps:

- 1. Create their own diversity wheel. Explain that everyone’s diversity wheel looks different, and they will even have different categories than the example wheel. Give them several examples of what might go in your wheel, such as: divorced parents, only child, Jewish, sister, friend, Asian American, middle class, 6th grader, etc.
- 2. Pair up with someone, preferably someone they do not know well.
- 3. In their pairs, have students share two stories with each other.
 - First, they should share stories about when they felt especially proud to be associated with one of the identifiers they selected.
 - Next, they should share a story about a time it was particularly painful to be associated with one of the identity dimensions they chose.
- 4. Ask students to share a stereotype they have heard about one dimension of their identity that fails to describe them accurately.

Discussion:

- Ask if any students would like to share one of their stories.
- Ask if any students would like to share one of their stereotypes. Alternately, if time permits, you could go around the room and ask each pair to please share one stereotype.
- How do the dimensions of your identity that you chose as important differ from the dimensions other people use to make judgments about you?
- Did anybody hear somebody challenge a stereotype that you once bought into? If so, what?
- How did it feel to be able to stand up and challenge your stereotype?
- There is sometimes laughter when somebody shares common stereotype such as "I may be Arab, but I am not a terrorist" or "I may be a teacher, but I do have a social life." If you hear laughter, ask why the students laughed.
- Where do stereotypes come from?
- How can we eliminate them?
- Use the activity to transition into a discussion about bullying and diversity, by asking if anyone has ever been bullied or socially rejected because of one of their identities. How did this make you feel? How did you handle it? Have you ever bullied someone because of their identity?
- NOTE: The key to this activity is to encourage students to think about the stereotypes they apply to people and to make a conscious effort to think more deeply about them, eventually eliminating them. It can be especially effective if you participate while you facilitate. If you are willing to share your own experiences, students are more likely to feel open to share their own.



Experiencing Empathy

Activity #1: Garbage Ball (An Activity about Privilege)

Goal: To allow students to experience privilege.

Instructions: Offer students some incentive to play the game (i.e. "I'm giving you the chance to earn extra credit!" Or, "I have 5 dollars in my pocket, let's see if you can win it!")

- Tell students to take out a piece of paper and write their names in large letters.
- Crumple up the paper into a tight paperwad.
- Place a (preferably clean) garbage can close to the front row of desks (often, I use a hula hoop or an empty desk instead of a garbage can). Tell students their goal, in order to win the extra credit or money, is simply to throw their paper wad into the garbage can.
- The trick, however, is that students must remain seated in their desks (sometimes I allow them to stand, but tell them they must stand next to their desk).
- On the count of three, throw the paper wads! (Alternately, if it is a small class, you can have students go row-by-row so they can see how well their classmates do).

Discussion:

- Ultimately, the majority of students who successfully throw their paper wad into the garbage will be those in the front row, rather than the back row. So, the discussion should focus on how fair the activity was, how students felt during the activity, and how the activity correlates to the real world. You should also let students know the activity was NOT actually for extra credit or money (or you could give the whole class the extra credit).
- Was this activity fair? Why/why not?
 - Ask this separately to front row and back row students.
- Did this activity make anyone angry?
- Front row, how aware were you that you had an advantage?
- Back row, how aware were you that you had a disadvantage?
- Why wasn't the activity fair?
- Did everyone have an equal chance of success? If some students in the back row actually successfully got their paper wad into the garbage, then ask the class why the student in the back was able to make it. Doesn't that mean the back row had a chance? Why/why not?
- Does this activity relate to anything that happens in the real world? How so?
- What connections do you see between the activity and real life?
- What might make someone be in the "back row" in real life? The front row?
- How must these individuals feel about their social location?
- How can we ensure that everyone has a fair chance?
- At the end of your series of questions, explain to students that the closer they were to the garbage, the better their odds. This is what privilege looks like. It doesn't guarantee you'll make it (point out people in the front row who did NOT make it), and it doesn't mean no one else can make it (point out people in the back row who DID make it); however, it loads the odds in your favor.
- Optional: Tell them, your job as students who are receiving an education is to be aware of your privilege and use this particular privilege called 'education' to do your best to achieve great things, all the while advocating for those in the rows behind you.

Activity #2: Resourceless

Goal: To help students understand what it feels like to lack resources. To get students thinking about how marginalization, ostracism, and exclusion take resources away from groups. To assist students in analyzing ways that language constructs entire systems of inclusion and exclusion and defines what counts as a resource. The activity is similar to the paper wad activity in that you are setting up an unfair game. The difference here is that the unfairness won't be as obvious.

Overview: The instructor breaks students into four groups and gives each group the same activity to complete (see below). Groups are given envelopes with supplies, and told they can only use supplies in the envelopes to complete the tasks. However, the instructor intentionally creates four groups that have unequal resources, by putting different supplies in each envelope. Students are told that no group has all the resources to complete the tasks, but they can negotiate with each other for materials. Do NOT tell them that they have unequal resources.

Materials for envelopes:

- Group #1: ruler, scissors, green paper, red paper, pencil
- Group #2: scissors, tape, green paper, red paper, pencil
- Group #3: any random materials that won't help them win, or will only help them if they are really creative – for example, paper clips, markers, a calculator, a rubber band ball, white paper, pink paper, pencil
- Group #4: White paper, green paper, pencil

Instructions:

- Break the class into 4 groups.
- Tell them the group to complete all five tasks first wins extra credit points (winners do not actually receive extra credit points) The promise of points is meant 1) to get them to take the game seriously, 2) to encourage resource competition, as often happens between real-world groups, 3) to get them angry about the unfair resources, which can prompt a discussion about social justice. At the end of the game, tell them there are no points [or you can give them all points] and use the perception of points as a discussion point.
- Tell them they are only allowed to use the materials they have been given to complete the activity (meaning, they cannot even use an outside pencil!)
- Pass out the bags/envelopes with supplies and let them get started.
- Tell them to shout out when they think they have finished. When a group thinks they have won, tell the class to stop working while you confirm the group has completed all tasks by measuring all their items.

Discussion:

- **Overall Impression:** What happened during this activity?
 - Ask each group how their group performed, and how they felt.
 - Overall, what did you think of this activity?
 - Some specifics: what was your impression, did you like it or dislike it, did you understand what was going on, etc.?
- **Resources:** What were the resources in this game? Who had which resources?

- How long did it take you to realize who had what resources?
- What relationship did resources have to winning?
- What relationship did resources have to negotiation?
- How did resource distribution affect your attitude? How hard you tried? Achievement?
- **Justice:** Was this activity fair?
 - How did you feel about extra credit points being associated with winning?
 - What would happen if I did the same activity at the start of every class period with each group getting the same resources they did today?
 - What would your reaction be? Why?
 - What if I did this with quizzes? What if ALL classes on campus did this?
- **Connections:** What connections can you make between this task and conditions that exist in “the real world”? (Think about race/ethnicity; sex; sexual orientation; ability status)
 - How do patterns of resource distribution affect different groups in America?
 - How might persistent unequal distribution of resources affect attitude, achievement, advancement, etc?

TASKS:

Group #: _____

Names:

Instructions:

The first set of people to complete all the tasks accurately will win. You must use only the materials provided in your envelope, but you may negotiate with each other for the use of needed materials and tools on any mutually agreeable basis.

Complete the following tasks:

1. Make a 4 x 2 inch rectangle of red paper
2. Make a 3 x 5 inch T-shaped piece of pink and green paper
3. Make a 4 x 4 inch flag of any three colors

Note: All measurements must be exact in order to win. I'll be using a ruler to measure exactness.

Activity #3: Crossing the Line

Goal: To help students increase students' awareness of their own and others' experiences of privilege and diversity. This activity is difficult and requires a great deal of acceptance among the students. It might not be appropriate for every class.

Instructions: Have your students stand in a line in the middle of a large space (I often take my students outside). You will make a statement about a specific identity category/label/description. Ask all those to whom the description applies to take a step forward or backwards (the statement will indicate direction of movement). Ask students to follow two critical rules:

- 1) Listening: Let's have silence throughout the exercise – no giggling or talking. Silence will enable us to experience our personal thoughts and feelings more clearly.
- 2) Respect: It is imperative that we respect the dignity of everyone in the class. Everything shared should remain confidential.

Some guidelines include:

- There is no pressure to respond. Be as honest as you would like. Do not risk more than you feel comfortable sharing. You decide what to share and expose. Exercise the option to pass if you wish.
- Each of the categories will have some "gray areas". Define the terms used as YOU understand them. If you have serious reservations about the clarity or meaningfulness of a word then the best thing to do is not take a step.
- Once we begin, there can be NO talking, No interruptions and please do not ask questions.
- If you take a step, note your feelings as you do so.

Statements:

If your primary ethnic identity is American, take one step forward.

If you grew up expecting your parents to help pay for college, take one step forward.

If your parents are divorced, take one step back.

If you are a man, take one step forward.

If you were raised by someone other than your biological parents, take one step back.

If there were people who worked in your household as housecleaners, gardeners, babysitters, etc., take one step forward.

If you were ever called names because of your race, class, ethnicity, gender, or sexual orientation, take one step back.

If you have ever hesitated to reveal you or your family's religious traditions, take one step back.

If you have immediate family members who are doctors, lawyers, teachers, or other professionals, take one step forward.

If you ever tried to change your appearance, mannerisms, or behavior to avoid being judged or ridiculed, take one step back.

If you ever had your name mispronounced, step back.

If you ever had an allowance during high school, step forward.

If your parents told you that you could be anything you wanted to be, step forward.

If you grew up in a single parent household, take one step back.

If there were more than 50 books in your house when you grew up, take one step forward.

If you were brought to art galleries or plays by your parents, take one step forward.

If you have ever felt judged or uncomfortable because of the size, height, or shape of your body, take one step back.

If one of your parents were unemployed, underemployed, or laid off, not by choice, take one step back.

If you attended a private school or summer camp, take one step forward.

If you were ever embarrassed or ashamed of your clothes, your house or your family car when growing up take one step backward.

If you regularly ate family dinners together, take one step forward.

If you were ever discouraged from academics, extracurricular activities, or athletics because of race, class, gender, or sexual orientation, take one step back.

If anyone in your family has had a problem with drug or alcohol abuse, take one step back.

If you were ever encouraged to attend a college by your parents, take one step forward.

If you have taken a vacation out of the country, take one step forward.

If one of your parents did not complete high school, take one step back.

If your family owned your own house, take one step forward.

If you saw members of your race, ethnic group, gender, or sexual orientation portrayed on television in degrading roles, take one step back.

If you or your immediate family ever inherited money or property, take a step forward.

If you were ever afraid of violence because of your race, ethnicity, gender, or sexual orientation, take one step back.

If you were generally able to avoid places that were dangerous, take one step forward.

If you ever felt uncomfortable about a joke related to your race, ethnicity, gender, or sexual orientation, take one step back.

If you had to rely primarily on public transportation, take one step back.

If you or anyone in your immediate family were ever a victim of violence related to your race, ethnicity, gender, or sexual orientation, take one step back.

If your parents did not grow up in the United States, take one step back.

If you studied the history and culture of your ethnic ancestors in elementary and secondary school, take one step forward.

If you have ever felt lonely, take one step back.

If you have cried at least once this year, take a step back.

If you have ever been threatened, bullied, or socially rejected, take one step back.

If you have always had at least one friend, take a step forward.

If you want a hug right now, take one step forward.

Discussion:

- Now, have everyone look around and see where they ended up as a class. Is there a lot of space between them? Are certain people much farther away than others?
- You can choose to have students answer questions as a class, you can pair them up, or put them into groups. I usually have students look around and pair up with someone far away from where they ended up on the line.
- **Feelings:**
 - How are you feeling right now?
 - Were some steps easier or harder to take than others? Why/why not?
 - What did it feel like when you were taking a step forward?
 - What did it feel like when you taking a step back?
 - How do you feel about how far in front or behind others you ended up?
- **Lessons:**
 - What do you think was the purpose of this activity?
 - What is one thing you learned about the activity?
 - What is one thing you learned about yourself? About your classmates?
 - What is something that surprised you?
 - What does this activity have to do with diversity?
 - Does this activity demonstrate anything about privilege?