

ACTIVITY 8.8

Cisgender Privilege

Directions: This teaching tool works best in groups of 15 to 30. There are two different ways instructors can implement this exercise. One way is by having audience members stand, line up, and take a step forward each time they identify with a statement read by the instructor. Another method is to have audience members stay at their seats and simply stand up when they identify with a statement read. Depending on the method chosen, it can be helpful for instructors to demonstrate briefly what is expected from the audience. If you are using the stepping forward method, make sure you have enough room for individuals to spread out. In addition, it is important to make sure that the activity is accessible for everyone; instructors might say something like, "If it is difficult or physically uncomfortable for you to walk (or stand up), we welcome you to find another way to participate that works for you." If you have a smaller group, you might choose to have the participants read the statements aloud and process each of them as you go along. Because some audience members may not feel safe or comfortable with the level of self-disclosure required for this exercise, instructors should always give participants the option of not participating.

Read the following statement: "Privileges are unearned benefits that someone gains on the basis of their perceived identity. Cisgender means that one has a gender identity which aligns with the sex they were assigned at birth. Cisgender privilege is, therefore, all the unearned privileges that are gained simply for having this alignment. The following activity aims to highlight the privileges that cisgender individuals have and that gender expansive and transgender (GET) individuals do not have."

The instructor should state, "By participating in this activity, you may disclose some personal information about yourself. We encourage you to take care of yourself and decide what you feel safe disclosing as you participate in this activity. It is OK if you choose not to participate and simply reflect on the exercise as others participate. Please pay attention to what you are feeling during the activity. I am going to read some statements. If the statement is true for you, then please step forward" (or, if using the other method, "please stand up." Participants should then sit down before the next statement).

After the activity is completed, a pattern should have developed in which most cisgender individuals will have moved farther ahead of GET participants (or if using the stand-up method, participants with more privileges will have stood more). Discuss with the group what their experiences were during the exercise. What did they learn? Are there privileges they did not know they possessed? Are there privileges they realized they lack compared with other participants? Instructors might also choose to have participants initially debrief in smaller groups before facilitating a larger group discussion.

Cisgender Privileges Activity

Below is a list of 25 cisgender privileges. We suggest reading 15 to 25 privileges for this activity.

1. Please step forward if you are able to use a public restroom without fear of violence or harassment because of your gender identity or perceived gender identity.
2. Please step forward if the gender and the name listed on your driver's license match your gender identity and your name.
3. Please step forward if you can tell others your name without being asked what your "real," "legal," or birth name is.

(continued)

ACTIVITY 8.8 (Continued)

4. Please step forward if you can expect that your health insurance will cover routine doctor's visits for all needed treatment.
 5. Please step forward if you feel accepted by all your family members.
 6. Please step forward if you are able to meet someone for the first time and do not have to worry that they will use incorrect gender pronouns when speaking to you.
 7. Please step forward if people you have just met do not ask you personal questions about your body (including what surgeries you have had), personal history, and identity.
 8. Please step forward if your gender identity has been respected your whole life by doctors, parents, teachers, professors, relatives, classmates, and employers.
 9. Please step forward if you have never been fired from any job due to your gender identity and/or perceived gender identity.
 10. Please step forward if you have never been evicted from housing because of your gender identity and/or perceived gender identity.
 11. Please step forward if you are able to go through security at the airport calmly, without fear of being questioned about your gender identity and/or "patted down" by someone of the opposite gender.
 12. Please step forward if you have never had a waiter or waitress or food server incorrectly gender you when you went out to eat.
 13. Please step forward if you have never paid for cosmetic surgery to feel more congruent with your gender in your body.
 14. Please step forward if you are able to walk into a department store and feel confident that you will not be harassed for shopping in the women's or men's section.
 15. Please step forward if you have never had your basic civil rights denied because of your gender identity.
 16. Please step forward if you have never been called a slur such as "trannie," "he-she," or "hermaphrodite."
 17. Please step forward if you are able to use a gym locker room or store changing room without fears that you will be stared at or pointed at.
 18. Please step forward if you are able to find mentors and role models who reflect your gender identity.
 19. Please step forward if you are easily able to find community services for people with a similar gender identity as yourself.
 20. Please step forward if you have been able to move to another part of the country without worrying about your safety or that your legal rights will change because of your gender identity.
 21. Please step forward if you have your gender as an option on most forms.
 22. Please step forward if no one has ever asked you when you "knew" that you were your gender.
 23. Please step forward if you are able to find clothes (including shoes) that fit your gender expression and you do not have to place special orders to get items in your size.
 24. Please step forward if you do not have to worry about old photographs not reflecting your true self.
 25. Please step forward if others do not use you as a scapegoat for their unresolved gender issues.
-