

Circle of Diversity

An exercise to raise self-awareness about our own diversity

The purpose of this exercise is to raise RAs' self-awareness about their own diversity as well as the diversity of others around them. This exercise could invoke a range of emotions and responses and will need ample time to debrief and follow up. You may tailor this exercise to meet the needs of your staff in various degrees of risk. We also encourage you to create other questions in addition to the ones provided here.

Before beginning the exercise, form a large circle in which everyone can see each other. Explain to RAs that you will be reading numerous statements. If the statement applies to them, they should step into the circle and join others like themselves. If the statement does not apply, they should remain on the outside of the circle. Try to avoid answering too many questions about what each question means. RAs must define for themselves what certain questions mean and they must decide for themselves whether to self-identify or not. Explain that there should not be any discussion about why they choose to step into the circle (or not step in) during the exercise, but there will be time at the end to discuss.

(NOTE: Some variations of the circle include forming a line, holding hands, and asking people to take one step forward if the statement applies to them. You may also choose to discuss why people are in the circle as you go along instead of at the end. For more impact and reflection, take a few minutes for each statement. Ask individuals in the circle to look around at the people who are in the circle with them, and then look at the people who are not in the circle. What does this mean for them?)

Please emphasize the importance of creating a safe space, maintaining confidentiality, and being non-judgmental. Ensure RAs that the exercise is completely voluntary and that if they are not comfortable self-identifying with a particular statement, they should feel free not to step into the circle. However, encourage them to challenge themselves and go beyond their comfort levels during this exercise.

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For the purposes of this exercise, family is defined however you choose to define it, whether (immediate family or extended family or “like” family).

*** (higher risk questions)**

I am proud of being a woman

I am proud of being a man

I had a happy childhood

I feel supported being in college

I am close with most of my family

I am the first in my family to attend college

I identify myself as Jewish

I identify myself as Buddhist

I identify myself as Christian

I identify myself as Muslim

I identify myself as Hindu, Sikh

I identify myself as Morman

I identify myself as Bahai'

I identify myself as agnostic or atheist

I identify myself as spiritual, but not religious

I have attended a religious or spiritual service that is not of my own religious/spiritual identity

I had “enough” growing up as a child (however you define “enough”)

I had “more than enough” growing up as a child (however you define “enough”)

I had “less than enough” growing up as a child (however you define “enough”)

* I have felt ashamed by the amount of money my family has or by the size of my house or by what resources or belongings my family has (either too much or too little)

I have experienced the death of a close family member or close friend

I have or someone in my family has a physical disability

* I have a hidden disability (physical or learning)

I am comfortable with my body

* I have felt ashamed of myself because of my body, my intellect or education, or my family

I identify myself as Black or African American

I identify myself as Asian or Asian American

I identify myself as White or European

I identify myself as Pacific Islander

I identify myself as biracial, triracial, or of combined heritage

I have had to check “other” on forms that ask my race or ethnicity

I have a close friend who is a person of color

* I feel comfortable talking about race and ethnicity with people who are not of my race

Someone in my extended family (grandparents, aunts, uncles, cousins) lives in my house with my family

* I or someone in my family is lesbian, gay, bisexual, or transgendered

I know someone who is lesbian, gay, bisexual, or transgendered

I am an ally to lesbian, gay, bisexual, or transgendered people

- * I or someone in my family has had a problem with alcoholism or drug abuse
 - * There is a history of alcoholism or drug abuse in my family
 - * I know someone who has a history of mental health issues
 - * I or someone in my family has experienced verbal, physical, or emotional/mental abuse
 - * I or someone in my family has experienced sexual abuse
 - * I or someone in my family has experienced sexual assault or rape
- I have felt discriminated against on the basis of my gender, race or ethnicity, religion, ability or disability, sexual orientation, or socio-economic status
- I have felt ashamed because of my gender, race or ethnicity, religion, ability or disability, sexual orientation, or socio-economic status

Discussion Questions

- What was your reaction to this exercise? How did you feel afterwards?
- What did it feel like to step into the circle? What was it like not to be in the circle?
- Were there questions you were hoping would not be asked? Any you wish had been asked?
- How might such issues/factors affect your residents? How might they affect your relationship with your residents?
- Did you learn things about yourself or were you forced to think about things you've never thought about before?
- What role does privilege play in this? What role does pride and shame play?