

Open Your Class With This Tomorrow *Whistling Vivaldi*

Privilege Walk

Purpose: This activity is intended to demonstrate how an individual's life experiences may allow some people to have advantages over others in reaching a goal that the student has determined the individual on the card they have been given may want to accomplish. The intended outcome of the activity is to encourage students to demonstrate more empathy towards those who may have faced challenges in their lives due to their socioeconomic status, disability or other unchangeable characteristics. Additionally, students should be able to see that those who have faced significant challenges have still been able to overcome these challenges and accomplish their dreams. While students are likely to consider these questions according to their own experiences, in order to make the activity less emotional, students will be provided with a card identifying an individual and they will respond to the questions for their character rather than themselves.

Directions: Have students line up in a straight line shoulder to shoulder. Distribute a card of personal information to each student (see Case studies). Have the students read the card with personal information and create a goal that this individual may want to accomplish. The instructor should read the statements below and students will take one step forward or back as the statement indicates. If the statement does not relate to the person on the card, or is neutral the student should not move for that statement.

Note: Students will not have every statement represented on their case study cards. If you have more than ten students, simply provide multiple students in class with duplicates of the same cards.

Statements to read to class:

1. Did you or a parent who work a second job or take on extra hours during nights and weekends to support your family? Take one step back
2. Can you openly show affection for your romantic partner without fear of ridicule, judgment or violence (This person is heterosexual or in an otherwise "traditional" relationship? Take one step forward
3. Have you ever been diagnosed with a physical or mental illness or disability? Take one step back
4. Have you ever been bullied or made fun of for something you could not control? Take one step back
5. Have you ever had to move, sleep at a friend's, neighbors, in the car or somewhere else because you did not have a place to live or could not pay the mortgage? Take one step back
6. Did you or your parent's graduate/attend college? Take one step forward if not, take one step back
7. Did you attend private school or summer camp? Take one step forward
8. Have you or anyone in your family ever been addicted to alcohol, gambling or drugs? Take one step back
9. Can you generally see people on television or in movies or advertisements who look like you? Take one step forward if not, take one step back
10. Are you are left-handed. Take one step back

11. Were you raised in a single-family home or have you experienced divorce or death of a parent? Take one step back
12. Have you ever faced a major setback while attempting to reach your goals? Take one step back. If you had someone believe you could achieve your goals take one step forward.

Directions: At this point, students will be standing in different places based on moving forward or backward. Have all of the students come into a single file line but equal to the distance forward or back in which they ended the activity. Place a garbage bin (or other goal) a few steps in front of the person who is farthest ahead in the group and ask each participant to crumble up the goal they have created for themselves, students should then takes turns trying to make their goal into the basket which will represent that they have achieved their goals. Obviously, this will be far easier for those in front than in the back based on the privileges or set backs they have experienced.

Debriefing Questions:

1. What sorts of emotions did you feel when completing this activity?
2. Explain your thoughts when taking one step forward or back?
3. Without attempting to place blame for where one ends up in the activity, what challenges do the individuals towards the back face in attempting to reach their goals?
4. Why may it be difficult for the people who ended up towards the front to understand the challenges those further back face?
5. How can this exercise help to make us more empathetic and understanding of the challenges others and face that often go unnoticed?
6. How can those who face challenges in their lives still work to accomplish their goals?

Resources

<https://peacelearner.org/2016/03/14/privilege-walk-lesson-plan/>

<http://www.thecollegefix.com/post/25794/>

<http://www.thecollegefix.com/post/25794/>

http://www.albany.edu/ssw/efc/pdf/Module%205_1_Privilege%20Walk%20Activity.pdf

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2KlvmuxzYE>