

Identity Strands Exercise

1 HOUR, 15 MINUTES

Learning Objectives

- To allow participants an opportunity to explore identity(ies), identity formation, the intersections of identities and to understand each other in relation to their experiences and identity
- To create a space of intimacy and vulnerability where the participants think critically of their identities and how their experiences relate to other people
- To allow participants to understand each other at a deeper level and build stronger bonds with each other

Description of Activity

Posted around the room are sheets of paper with identities on them—the participants will have to respond to statements read by the facilitators (who will also participate). The participants will move and stand under the sign that applies or appeals to them the most and then will share their experience as to why they stood there.

Facilitator's note: *Your role is to really access the room and to create a safe atmosphere for the participants to share. If no one is opening up first, share your story (and make it DEEP!), because your story will facilitate the openness for the entire group. If no one is talking, pinpoint people who have not spoken up yet. Everyone needs to participate (including staff); if not, it disrupts the atmosphere with negativity. If there is someone who does not want to participate, either ask them whether they want to share an experience; if not, then move on with the activity without the individual(s) who are pushing back.*

Materials Needed

- Tape
- Markers
- 1 chart paper for community agreements
- 6 pieces of paper for extra
- 19 pieces of 8.5" x 11" paper that are labeled:
 - Race
 - Class/Socio-Economic Status
 - Gender
 - Sex
 - Ethnicity
 - National Origins/Nationality
 - Sexual Orientation/Identity/Expression
 - Education
 - Family
 - Age
 - Neighborhood
 - Spirituality
 - Body Image/Size
 - Language Ability
 - Mental Health/Illness
 - Ability/Disability
 - Citizenship
 - Diet/Dietary Restriction
 - Political Ideology

AGENDA

Script: Intro

5 minutes

Good morning everyone. So for this activity, I need everyone to be attentive, respectful and open to new ideas and perspectives. We are going to talk about identity and how identities impact us. We will have a chance to understand each other as individuals on a deeper level—understand our passions, influences and experiences. Some of the things that will come out of this will be and are very personal, so please be mindful, respectful and open. Through understanding each other's experiences and identities, we build stronger relationships as a team.

10 minutes

Thank you everyone. So located around the room are signs. They represent different identities.

ASK: Can someone read the signs? (pinpoint someone to read the signs).

With these signs,

ASK: As you look at these signs, do you think there are any words missing or not represented?

(Write down identities on a sheet of paper and post it in the room).

So we will be reading statements to you, then everyone will move to the sign or identity that applies to you the most. It is difficult because of the intersections of our identities; I would suggest for you to decide on a sign that stands out to you the most.

Activity

60 minutes

Read the following statements and have participants stand under the sign that applies the most to them. Have a few participants share their experience for each option. Debrief afterward. Alternate reading between facilitators and participation, too.

- People see this aspect of my identity first.
- People treat me differently most often based on this aspect of my identity.
- I think about this aspect of my identity the most.
- I think about this aspect of my identity the least.
- I know the most about this aspect of my identity.
- I know the least about this aspect of my identity.
- This aspect of my identity makes me the most uncomfortable.
- This aspect of my identity has challenged me the most.
- This part of my life is where I experience the most privilege.
- My parents emphasized this aspect of my identity the least.
- My parents emphasized this aspect of my identity the most.
- I have had the most negative experiences with this aspect of my identity.
- I have had the most positive experiences with this aspect of my identity.