



Discussion starters related to Inclusion and Equity

(As outlined on Awaken website)

- **Identity**—what is social identity? How does our identity shape the way we experience the world? Why is it important to recognize all of our identities? What does it mean to bring our whole-selves to work? Why do we need to talk about race? Why can't we just be one human race?
- **Privilege**—what is privilege and why does it make us feel defensive when we hear the word? Why do we have to talk about privilege? Is privilege bad? Should I feel guilty if I have privileges? How do we move forward from defensiveness to allyship using privilege?
- **Power**—how does power operate in our society and at work? Who has power? What power dynamics are at play along the identity lines? How do we shift power? What does it take to redistribute power equitably?
- **Discrimination**—what does discrimination mean, really? Can something be called “reverse discrimination?” Why or why not? How are power and privilege related to discrimination?
- **Cycle of socialization**—how do we learn stereotypes? Where do our unconscious biases actually come from? How do we break the cycle of socialization?
- **Intersectionality**—what is intersectionality? What do people mean by “white feminism?” Why is intersectionality important? How do all of our different identities intersect? How do we make sure our efforts are intersectional?
- **Allyship / accomplices**—what does it mean to be an “ally?” Who gets to decide who is or is not an ally? Why do we fear being an ally? What happens when an “ally” makes a mistake? What is an ally cookie?
- **Systemic oppression vs. personal experience**—how do we differentiate between personal experiences / exceptionalism from systemic and institutionalized oppression? What do we say when someone in the dominant group (e.g., White, cis-men, Christian, heterosexual, etc.) says something like: “I’m a white person but I struggled a lot in my life. I don’t understand what you mean by ‘white privilege’ because I feel like I didn’t have any special privileges.”
- **Microaggressions**—what are microaggressions and how are they different from someone just being a jerk or passive aggressive? How do I know when I’m microaggressing? What if I didn’t mean it that way?



•**Nonviolent communications**—how do we move forward as a team when someone makes a mistake? How do we engage in uncomfortable conversations in a way that doesn't erode our relationships? How do we acknowledge when harm is caused and take responsibility for our actions? How do we express our hurt without completely expending ourselves or being tokenized?



Tips for Discussing the “Basics”

1. **Create a compassionate space** in which people can engage without judgment, shame, or fear → Try setting a set of ground rules prior to discussing
2. **Make learning personal** and discussion-based, rather than didactic lecture-based → Structure time for introspection and pair-sharing
3. **Ensure the integrity of the concepts are not lost** while allowing differing perspectives → Secure skilled facilitators who can put guard rails on discussions that can easily go rogue (and cause more harm than good)
4. **Provide real-life scenarios and practical examples** to make them come to life → Prepare relevant examples in advance and solicit input from audience
5. **Don’t educate at the expense of marginalized people** in the room—never tokenize individuals or force personal story sharing → Think critically about each group exercise / activity to ensure intimacy and vulnerability are created consensually

In order to create real change, we need to understand Unconscious Bias as a fundamental social justice issue that gives birth to all kinds of -isms in our society, not some standalone concept that is nice-to-know.

Answer – why, how and what

Like, how are you not going to talk about the Cycle of Socialization and Institutionalization of Bias (granted, you don’t have to use these words to explain the concepts—making the learning accessible is also important)**when talking about Unconscious Bias?** Come on, now!

Remember—**at the root of all institutional injustices are unconscious biases that went unchecked.**