



Embracing
Intersectionality
for Health Equity
& Justice

EXERCISE: PRIVILEGE WALK

Technique: group game

Estimated length: 30 minutes

Debrief: 15 minutes

A privilege walk allows participants to become more aware of the power dynamics that exist within and between communities and organisations. It also ensures that those lacking power are supported and recognised in institutions and within our work and movements. The exercise provides an opportunity to think critically about our differences and similarities. How do they result in different levels of power within movements, and what are the barriers to change and organising? It also allows us as advocates to think about how our backgrounds and access can create distance between us, and how we approach advocacy.

- » The facilitator divides the participants into groups (max 15 persons per group). Each group follows the instructions below.
- » Give each of the participants a piece of paper with a character written on it. The characters are listed below.
- » Ask the participants to come together in an open space for the exercise and to stand in a row.
- » Use a piece of tape to mark the starting point of the participants, so they are able to measure the distance walked.
- » Tell the participants to take one step forward or backward if the statement applies to the character they've been given. Then read the statements below, one by one.
- » If possible, the debrief should be done in a circle.

Privilege Walk Characters

1. Male sex worker, married, 3 children
2. Widowed woman, aged 35, uses drugs, works for people in their fields, depends on the kindness of neighbours
3. Cis-male NGO worker, university education, injects drugs
4. 18-year-old trans man, not at school, wants to apply for university admission
5. Female divorced sex worker, 3 children at secondary school
6. 16-year-old girl, deaf, sex worker, lives in a border town
7. Displaced 60-year-old woman, former sex worker, working as a nanny in a city
8. 21-year-old trans woman, sex worker, fashion designer, no formal schooling
9. Male restaurant owner, queer, married with 4 children, primary school education
10. Female maize farmer, sex worker, co-wife, 10 children, no schooling
11. Gay HIV/AIDS peer educator, single, living with HIV
12. Trans woman, NGO worker with university education, single

13. Male gay taxi driver, no education, in a relationship
14. 25-year-old lesbian, parents struggling financially, kicked out of home
15. Female programme officer, donor/funder
16. Non-binary blind person, cannot work
17. Lesbian, married (to a man), 2 children under the age of 5
18. Gay filmmaker, lives in a capital city
19. Female restaurant owner, no schooling, sex worker, injects drugs, 5 children, abusive husband
20. Widow, lesbian, wheelchair user, 3 children who are not at school, sells used clothing at a market
21. Sex worker, aged 16, never went to school

Statements

1. If you're right-handed, take a step forward. (test)
2. If you were arrested and could afford bail, take a step backward.
3. If you went to university, take a step forward.
4. If you know something about the constitution, and the constitution protects your rights, take a step forward.
5. If you were to go to jail and your family is likely to come and visit (if you wanted them to), take a step forward.
6. If you can speak English/French, take a step forward.
7. If you constantly feel unsafe walking alone at night, take a step backward.
8. If you're able to live your life without fear of sexual assault or harassment, take a step forward.
9. If you would never think twice about calling the police if something happened, take a step forward.
10. If you own or can access a computer, take a step forward.
11. If you can show affection for your romantic partner in public without fear of ridicule or violence, take a step forward.
12. If you've ever had to skip a meal, or have been hungry, because there wasn't enough money to buy food, take a step backward.
13. If you have a visible disability, take a step backward.
14. If you have a non-visible illness or disability, take a step backward.
15. If you were ever discouraged from an activity, or not included, because of class, ethnicity, gender, disability, sexual orientation, gender identity or gender expression, take a step backward.
16. If you feel good about how your identities are portrayed by the media, or by the community you live in, take a step forward.
17. If you can afford the health services you need, take a step forward.
18. If someone has ever spoken for you when you didn't want them to do so, take a step backward.
19. If you live in an area with crime and drug activity, take a step backward.
20. If you're able to get employment without judgement or stigma, take a step forward.

Discuss the outcomes of the privilege walk and its implication in our work and movement building. Also, assess what capacities you need to be able to listen to others.

Some key questions that facilitators should ask:

- Why are some people at the back, and others at the front?
- How did the people at the back feel when the others were stepping forward?
- How did the people at the front feel when they moved ahead of the others?
- Can the participants who took only a few steps – or none – have their voices heard by those at the front? How can they be heard?
- What is the position of each person relative to others in the privilege walk?
- The distance between participants symbolises many real distances or inequalities in communities. What are they? (Socio-economic, cultural, rural/urban, status, etc.)

Adapted from:

1. <https://peacelearner.org/2016/03/14/privilege-walk-lesson-plan/>
2. <http://genderandmedia.bbcmediaaction.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/Power-Walk-Exercise.pdf><http://genderandmedia.bbcmediaaction.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/Power-Walk-Exercise.pdf>
3. <https://jliflc.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/06/Power-Walk.pdf>