

The Big 8 in a Backpack

Material:

- The table handout (see website resources). This can be printed in poster size or used as a powerpoint slide for reference during the social justice activities.
- Large Ziploc baggies for each participant
- Beads - enough for each participant to be able to select from a variety of beads.
- Keychains/string to be able to make a keychain to attach to the participants backpack as a reminder at school of this activity.

Instructions

1. Hang up the Big 8+ poster or refer to the handout.
2. Introduce the “Big 8+”. Go through the table, explaining all the concepts, and sharing your own identities for each category. This will role model for the group what you would like them to share in the next part of the instructions.
 - Examples:
 - I am Jewish and don’t have my holidays off work or school. I also sometimes see anti-Jewish symbols or hear anti-Jewish words. I am proud to be Jewish.
 - I am white and I don’t feel discriminated or stereotyped based on my race but I recognize that others who are not white do.
 - I have never been poor or had to worry significantly about money but I recognize that others struggle with even the basics of rent and groceries and how hard that is.
3. Have the group write each of their Big 8+ identities on a piece of paper. They don’t have to do all 8, they should share based on their level of comfort. They can discuss what the identities might mean for them, including any relevant experiences they have had. This is an opportunity for the group to go through each identity and recognize their privilege for some identities and their lack of privilege

The Backpack: A Metaphor for Understanding Privilege:

Instructions: Facilitators should read Peggy MacIntosh's article The Knapsack to prepare for this activity. Some of that content is adopted for this activity.

(<http://www.racialequitytools.org/resourcefiles/mcintosh.pdf>)

5. Facilitators put a backpack. Talk about how we are all born with privileges that give us societal benefits. Some of us have more than others. Some change over time such as socioeconomic status or ability. Many stay the same such as race and ethnicity. Let's pretend we carry these benefits in our backpacks. Show that because a backpack is worn on our backs we can't easily see what is in them even if we turn in circles to try and see. This is similar to not always seeing or being aware of our own privileges or benefits that we have. We can actually forget we have these privileges and benefits because we can't easily see them. Recognizing and staying aware of our own privileges and benefits is important as we all work for a more fair and just world in our everyday lives. Note: Using clear simple backpacks that are common for events and concerts works well to make the point that our privileges are often invisible to us but others can see them, particularly those with less privilege. You can also simply use Ziploc baggies to give the visual of a privilege backpack to demonstrate the metaphor. If you don't have clear backpacks, put on any backpack to demonstrate the metaphor.
6. Put a bunch of one type of object on a table. Have everyone now hold their backpacks, or Ziploc baggies so they can fill them when a privilege is called out. Begin by going through the big 8 categories. Example: if you are on the benefit side of the poster for race put an object in your backpack. If you are on the benefit side of ethnicity put an object in your backpack, etc.
7. Now read off some of the questions from the MacIntosh article list and/or the Privilege Walk activities list below <https://edge.psu.edu/workshops/mc/power/privilegewalk.shtml>. These questions have been adapted for this CC activity. Have participants put in an object for each privilege they have. **Note:** We don't use the Privilege Walk activity, only some of the questions. We prefer to make the point with our backpack activity instead.
8. Once you have gone through all the questions ask everyone to put on their backpacks of benefits and lead a discussion. If you are using Ziploc baggies just have them zip the baggies up.
9. Discuss how we can't give our privileges (race, gender, etc.) away to others that have less but we can turn our backpacks around and wear them in front with our arms around them (put backpacks/baggies in front) in order to stay aware of our own privileges. We have all

been on a bus or train where someone has on a backpack and turns around and we get hit with it because they didn't see us. Generally followed by "I'm sorry I didn't see you."

10. Have students create a keychain using their beads that they can wear on their backpack as a visual reminder of this activity/lesson.

Conclusion of Part

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When we wear our backpacks in front we can be more thoughtful of others and stay aware of our privileges. We can be an ally to those with less privilege. We can avoid whacking someone (microaggressions) with our backpacks, we can work in our everyday lives to make a more fair and just world, which begins by understanding the social construction of privilege. Some things about us can make us less privileged than others, and some can make us more privileged. It's important for us to recognize that these things don't define us. An important concluding message should be that how many items we have in our backpack or bag doesn't define us. What defines us is who we are. Ask the group to all sit in a circle and go around telling us 5 things about themselves. Examples could include things like "I am a good big sister, I have worked hard on my grades this semester, I like to cook, I treat my friends and family with kindness, I am close with my grandma, I play football, I love to dance, I love my dog." Point out similarities such as several of you really like sports or dance etc. Knowing each other beyond our identities helps us learn about each other and share who we are. We all have so much to be proud of.

Objects /Items Questions: *The following are questions to use when putting objects in the backpacks.*

- If your ancestors came to the USA by choice, not force, put one item in your backpack.
- If your primary ethnic identity is "Caucasian/White" put one item in your backpack.
- If you have never been called names because of your race, class, ethnicity, gender, or sexual orientation put one item in your backpack.
- If you have never been ashamed or embarrassed of your clothes, house, car, etc. put one item in your backpack.
- If one or both of your parents are professionals such as doctors, lawyers, etc. put one item in your backpack.
- If you grew up in a safe neighborhood put one item in your backpack.
- If you have never felt the need to change your appearance, mannerisms, or behavior to avoid being judged or ridiculed, put an item in your backpack.

- If you studied the culture of your ancestors in elementary school put one item in your backpack.
 - If you went to school speaking English put one item in your backpack.
 - If there were more than 50 books in your house when you grew up put one item in your backpack.
 - If you have never had to skip a meal or go hungry because there was not enough money to buy food when you were growing up put one item in your backpack.
 - If you were taken to art galleries or plays by your parents put one item in your backpack.
 - If your parents were never unemployed or laid off put one item in your backpack.
 - If you have health insurance put one item in your backpack.
 - If you attended private school or summer camp put one item in your backpack.
 - If your family has never had to move because they could not afford the rent put one item in your backpack.
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- If you were told that you were smart and capable by your parents put one item in your backpack.
 - If you have never been discouraged from academics or jobs because of race, class, ethnicity, gender or sexual orientation put one item in your backpack.
 - If you were encouraged to attend college put one item in your backpack.
 - If you do not have a disability put one item in your backpack.
 - If your family owned the house where you grew up put one item in your backpack.
 - If you frequently see members of your race or ethnic group portrayed on television in positive ways put one item in your backpack.
 - If your family owns a car put one item in your backpack.
 - If you have not been denied employment because of your race, ethnicity, gender or sexual orientation, put one item in your backpack.
 - If you have not been treated unfairly at school or work because of race, ethnicity, gender or sexual orientation, put one item in your backpack.
 - If you have never been accused of cheating or lying because of your race, ethnicity, gender, or sexual orientation, put one item in your backpack.
 - If you ever inherited money or property, put one item in your backpack.
 - If you have not had to rely primarily on public transportation, put one item in your backpack.
 - If you have never been stopped or questioned by the police because of your race, ethnicity, gender or sexual orientation, put one item in your backpack.
 - If you have never been afraid of violence because of your race, ethnicity, gender or sexual orientation, put one item in your backpack.
 - If your parents owned their own business put one item in your backpack.

- If you were generally able to avoid places that were dangerous, put one item in your backpack.
- If you have never been uncomfortable about a joke related to your race, ethnicity, gender or sexual orientation put one item in your backpack.
- If you have never been had violence against you because of your race, ethnicity, gender or sexual orientation, put one item in your backpack.
- If your parents grew up in the United States, put one item in your backpack.
- If your parents attended college put one item in your backpack.