

The Level Playing Field - Adapted from Paul Kivel

This exercise seeks to raise awareness of our privilege in terms of race, class, sexual orientation, physical ability and gender. It's not aimed at instilling guilt, but at questioning the assumption that our achievement occurs on a level playing field.

Exercise #1: Check all boxes that are true for you.

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> 1. It has always been legal for members of your race to vote, own property, and pass on wealth. <input type="checkbox"/> 2. Your parent(s) have only needed to work one job each (or less) in order to provide for your basic needs (enough food, adequate clothes, stable shelter, safety). <input type="checkbox"/> 3. You've had access to museums, lessons, plays, summer camps, or extra-curricular activities growing up. <input type="checkbox"/> 4. When you watch TV, read your U.S. History textbook, or read a magazine, you can easily find your race and culture reflected. <input type="checkbox"/> 5. You or your parents have never had to use public transportation to run errands, attend school, or get to work. <input type="checkbox"/> 6. You don't have to think about sexism, racism, classism, heterosexism, and ableism every day. You can decide when and where you deal with it. <input type="checkbox"/> 7. You've never been the victim of, or personally witnessed, a violent crime. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> 8. When you start a career, you won't have to worry about balancing your paying job with house-cleaning, cooking, childcare, or other caretaking <input type="checkbox"/> 9. It is expected that you would go to college. <input type="checkbox"/> 10. You don't need to research whether there are ramps, wide enough doorways, or handrails when you go to the movies, the mall or a restaurant. <input type="checkbox"/> 11. You generally feel safe hiking alone in the woods, or when holding hands with someone you are dating. <input type="checkbox"/> 12. When you get sick, your parents could leave work to get you without fear of getting fired. <input type="checkbox"/> 13. You grew up in a two-parent, rather than single-parent household. <input type="checkbox"/> 14. When you develop a health problem, you can have it treated without worrying about paying your other bills. <input type="checkbox"/> 15. You've never experienced skipping a meal, or going away from a meal hungry, because your family didn't have the money to buy enough food. |
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Exercise #2:

1. Where do you start on the playing field?
 - Place yourself on the graph below.
 2. How many more barriers do other groups face?
 - Estimate where each person might be (how many "true" boxes this person might check):
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| <p>A. John, a high school sophomore whose father earns \$9.50/hour as a cook</p> <p>B. Mary, a 35 year old medical researcher with a spinal cord injury.</p> | <p>C. Beth, an accountant who is a lesbian</p> <p>D. Caitlyn, a third grader at Jefferson Elementary, a St. Louis public school</p> <p>E. James, a 25 year old African-American businessman living in Webster Groves</p> <p>F. Juliana, a recent immigrant from a Somali refugee camp</p> <p>G. Angela, a 9 month old whose mother lives in North St. Louis City and works full time at a gas station</p> |
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