



AT THE CROSSROAD  
OF INEQUALITIES /  
DISCRIMINATION

PRACTICAL  
EXERCISE

# Along the paths of privilege

**Group size:**

up to 20 participants

**Duration:**

45–60 min (20 minutes for the practical part, 25–40 minutes for the discussion)

**Requisites for the practical exercise:**

- a space where participants can line up and move around
- printed role cards
- tape, string, stick or similar object to mark a straight starting line
- statements for youth workers (can be printed or on an electronic device)

**Type of practical exercise:**

team game

**Methods used:**

role-play, group reflection

**What is the purpose of this practical exercise? What does the youth worker want to achieve? What results can they expect?**

The aim of the practical exercise *Along the Paths of Privilege* is to show the participants where the power dynamics are in an explicit way. The goal of the exercise is to hold a discussion on the complex intersections of privilege and marginalisation in a less confrontational and more reflective way. Participants will learn that there are inequalities in society, as well as related prejudices, stereotypes and discriminations that allow or prevent different members of society to “advance”. Through role-playing, participants will be able to step into the shoes of people with different characteristics/circumstances from their own. The practical exercise is an opportunity to think critically about our differences and similarities. It serves as a good starting point for further discussions and exercises on intersectional discrimination.



## Do you know?

Advantages and privileges play an important role in shaping and perpetuating intersectional discrimination. Some groups enjoy certain advantages and privileges in society. This allows these groups to benefit more and receive better treatment than other groups. Intersectional discrimination occurs when someone suffers from several types of discrimination at the same time. This is based on racial, gender, social and other known differences. The advantages and privileges enjoyed by some groups at the expense of others can deepen and complicate these forms of discrimination.

- **Consolidation of existing power hierarchies:** People who have social, economic or cultural privileges are often in a better position to perpetuate and consolidate their positions of power. This consolidation of power can lead to the continuation and deepening of discrimination against those without such privileges. For example, privileges associated with white race, heterosexuality, or masculinity can help perpetuate systemic inequalities.
- **Failure to recognise intersectional burdens:** People with certain privileges can be blind to the experiences and challenges faced by those without those privileges. This lack of awareness can lead to a disregard for the needs and struggles of individuals who face intersectional discrimination. This makes their struggles for equality and justice even more difficult.
- **Unequal distribution of resources and opportunities:** Privileges give certain groups better access to education, employment, healthcare, and other important resources. This creates and deepens economic and social differences between groups, which in turn affects individuals who face intersectional discrimination, as they have fewer opportunities to improve their circumstances in life.
- **Maintaining the status quo:** Privileged groups are less motivated to change the existing system, as this system benefits them. This can lead to active or passive resistance to changes that could reduce inequalities. Such resistance makes the fight against intersectional discrimination more difficult and perpetuates systemic injustices.
- **Influence on political and social decisions:** People with privilege often have more influence on political and social decisions. This means that the policies and practices being implemented may be designed to protect or even increase their privileges, further marginalising those without such privileges.

Addressing intersectional discrimination requires acknowledging and understanding the impact of privilege and working against a system that places some groups at an advantage at the expense of others. This requires a conscious effort to change at the individual, institutional and structural levels, including recognising one's own privileges and taking action against inequalities.



## Practical exercise plan

- Before the practical exercise, print out the role cards and cut them out. Each participant must receive their role card.
- Prepare the room so that participants can move around the room from a common starting point.
- If necessary, divide the participants into groups.
- Each participant selects their role card from the deck.
- Invite the participants to read their role card and think about the person they will play when the game continues. Some characteristics/circumstances are written on the cards, while other characteristics/circumstances should be attributed to their roles by the participants. To help them in their considerations, you can ask them to think about the following questions:
  1. *How old is the person on your card?*
  2. *What gender are they?*
  3. *What is their economic status or the economic status of their family?*
  4. *What is their religious belief?*
  5. *What level of education have they attained?*
  6. *Are they employed?*
  7. *What political beliefs do they have?*
  8. *What is their sexual orientation?*
  9. *What is the colour of their skin?*
  10. *Do they have a visible or invisible disability?*
  11. *Do they have someone else to take care of besides themselves?*
  12. *Where do they live?*
  13. *Do they belong to a marginalised group?*
- Participants should not reveal their roles to each other.
- Invite the participants to line up in the middle of the room. On the floor, use tape, string, stick or other object to mark the initial starting line.
- Explain to the participants that for each statement that applies to the person from their role card, they should move one step forward or back, depending on the statement you are about to read.
- Begin reading the statements. Pause after each statement you read. Participants should move according to the statement read. Do not give any additional explanations or allow interaction between the participants while reading the statements.

- After reading the last statement, invite the participants to look around and assess their progress, or lack thereof, around the room.
- Invite the participant who is located in the far back of the room to introduce the person from the card and give their opinion about their position. Tell the same to the participant who is first (made the most steps forward).
- Invite the participants to a circle for a discussion. You can guide the discussion using the questions below. Make sure that all participants who want to give their opinion have the opportunity to do so.



### Questions for the discussion

1. *Why are some in the back and others in the front?*
2. *Did the position of any of the roles surprise you?*
3. *How did you feel at the back when others stepped forward?*
4. *How did you feel as you were stepping in front of others?*
5. *Which statement made you think the most?*
6. *If you could add a statement, what would it be?*
7. *What do you wish people knew about one of your identities, situations, or flaws of your role that caused you to take a step back?*
8. *Can the voice of those who have taken only a few steps forward, or none at all, be heard by those who are in front? How can they be heard?*
9. *What is the position of each individual in relation to the other participants?*
10. *The distance between participants symbolises many actual distances or inequalities in communities. What are these distances (socio-economic, cultural, rural/urban, political, gender, status, etc.)?*



### Statements

1. Take a step forward if you have brown eyes (test question).
2. Take a step forward if you have had or will have the opportunity to complete your education.
3. If your family doesn't support your lifestyle, take a step backward.
4. If you can move around without fear of sexual assault, take a step forward.
5. If you can show affection for your romantic partner in public without fear of ridicule or violence, take a step forward.
6. If you are subjected to insults, nasty looks or ridicule in public because of your religious beliefs, take a step backward.
7. Take a step forward if you're not worried about having enough food in the next months.
8. Take a step forward if you can earn enough money for a good life for yourself and your children.
9. Take a step forward if you can decide for yourself when and how many children you will have.

10. Take a step forward if you can get a bank loan to start a business if you want one.
11. If you've ever been diagnosed with a physical or mental illness/disability, take a step backward.
12. If your family did not speak Slovenian while growing up, take a step backward.
13. If your religious holidays are non-working days, take a step forward.
14. If you've ever been bullied or made fun of based on something you can't change, take a step backward.
15. If you are attending or have completed your studies, take a step forward.
16. If your outward appearance is different from most of the people around you, take a step backward.
17. If you are sure that your parents could help/support you financially if you find yourself in financial trouble, take a step forward.
18. If you have a visible disability or illness, take a step backward.
19. If you've ever been discouraged from an activity or excluded because of your social class, nationality, gender, disability, sexual orientation, gender identity or gender expression, take a step backward.
20. If you feel good about how your identities are portrayed in the media or the community you live in, take a step forward.



### Role cards

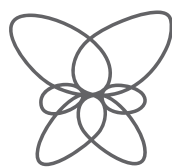
1. A 17-year-old pregnant student who lives in a boarding school in a bigger city. Her boyfriend left her. She wants to become a doctor. She is Catholic.
2. Female widow, 45 years old, three children (one adult, two minors), lives in her own house in the city centre. She is a lawyer by profession. In her free time, she likes to paint. She takes medication for mental problems.
3. A white, middle-aged man, married and with two children. He lives in the countryside. Twice a year, he goes on a week-long vacation (skiing, seaside) with his family and friends. His car broke down.
4. Single Roma man, 55 years old. He is unemployed. He completed primary school. He makes a living with occasional work. He is a good self-taught musician.
5. Married, middle-aged female doctor from Croatia, works in a male collective. She wants children. She goes golfing on the weekends.
6. A Filipino female immigrant who does not speak Slovenian. She has diabetes. She would like to send the money earned to her family in the Philippines.
7. A 15-year-old boy with disabilities in a wheelchair playing sitting volleyball. He attends high school. His parents moved from France before he was born. The family attends Buddhist rituals.
8. A male refugee of colour from Syria. He is a doctor by profession. He cannot find employment in Slovenia because he doesn't speak Slovenian. He is currently working as a food delivery man, but he is not happy with this job.
9. Unaccompanied male minor from Afghanistan. He is attracted to boys. He wants to be a rescue dog handler. He speaks Slovenian well.

10. A 23-year-old lesbian with attention deficit disorder who lives with her girlfriend in the capital. On the weekends, they go to the mountains with their relatives. They live in a rented apartment.
11. A middle-aged deaf father in a family with normal hearing. He is employed for a fixed term. The company is facing bankruptcy. He and his family moved from Serbia ten years ago.
12. A 14-year-old Roma girl will have to leave school when her parents find her a husband. She does not want to get married, but to continue her studies at the university.
13. A 50-year-old middle-aged female nurse who takes care of her elderly mother in addition to her family. She has left political beliefs. After participating in protests for a better position of nurses, she is in conflict with her family who have centre-right beliefs. She is married to an American.
14. A 40-year-old successful male pilot. His eyesight began to deteriorate, but he hasn't told anyone about it yet. His Catholic family noticed changes, but he managed to convince them by lying that he was healthy.
15. A 16-year-old female student wearing a headscarf. She is attracted to girls and boys. She lives in a strict Muslim family. She occasionally smokes weed with her friends.
16. A 10-year-old male Albanian. Parents do not speak Slovenian. He doesn't have many friends at school. His grades in Slovenian language are bad. He excels in sports and fine arts.
17. A 30-year-old woman who does not want children. Although she is Muslim, she does not wear a headscarf. She does not drink alcohol. She works in a night club as a waitress.
18. A 70-year-old man who went blind. His wife died. He lives in a dilapidated house in the countryside because he can't afford a nursing home. He relies on the help of his neighbours.
19. A gay activist who attends pride parades. His parents are divorced. His sister died due to complications during an operation. He applied for a job as a teacher in a boarding school. He wants to become a blood donor, but the law forbids it.
20. A homeless man who ended up on the streets because of drug use. He has a dog. He did not finish his university studies. He starts working part-time in production next week.



## Advice for the youth worker

- The practical exercise is most optimal if it is carried out in a group of up to 20 participants. This allows all participants an opportunity to express their opinions. If you have a larger group, try to split it into smaller groups and do the exercise separately for each group. If you cannot split into smaller groups, you can duplicate some roles (two or more participants have the same role card). Duplication of roles also allows you to discuss whether all participants with the same role have decided to advance (step forward) or not.
- With a larger group, make sure that there is enough space to perform the exercise (all participants must start the exercise in a straight line).
- Give participants enough time to familiarise themselves with their roles. Encourage them to think about all aspects of identities and life circumstances that affect the individual from the role card.
- The practical exercise is designed for one school period, but we recommend, if possible, to spend two school periods. Allow extra time for in-depth discussion. The larger the group, the more time you should spend on the discussion. This will allow all opinions to be heard.
- The discussion questions listed are for assistance and guidance only. We encourage you to add your own, and especially to respond to participants' comments.



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