



Anti-Racism Action Guide: Self-Exploration

As a health professional, it is of utmost importance that we work on understanding ourselves as cultural beings with our own worldview that is shaped by personal demographics, experiences, systems, and values. In clinical relationships, we bring with us a network of reference group and social memberships that affects our work. It is thus important to be aware of your reference groups and associated beliefs. Without such an awareness and understanding, you may inadvertently assume that everyone shares your worldview. When this happens, you can contribute to cultural oppression by imposing your values on your culturally different clients.

As a cultural being, we all belong to various socially constructed reference groups including race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, social class, and religion. Each of these reference groups are globally understood in the larger context you grew up and/or live in and each membership influences how one thinks, feels, and behaves.

Effective ways of better understanding and appreciating the impact – as well as interaction – of your identities can be achieved through both experiential and didactic means.

This anti-racism action guide includes a series of tips for self-exploration, along with a list of pertinent resources.

TIPS

Explore Your Reference Group Memberships

- Devote time to this exploration
- Read the relevant literature
- Reflect in an open and honest manner about the socialization of your multiple identities
- Consider how these socialization processes influenced your attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors
- Be compassionate toward yourself as you engage in this process of reflection
- Commit to ongoing self-exploration

Engage in Conversations with Trusted Peers or in Facilitated Groups

- Explore in the group your responses to the questions detailed below in Appendix

A

- Discuss your values, biases, attitudes, assumptions, behaviors, and general experience of the world
- Learn about the biases, values, and assumptions about human behavior that other individuals may hold

Write an Autobiographical Sketch

- Explore in your autobiographic sketch your responses to the questions detailed below in Appendix B
- Document the development of your reference group memberships from early childhood to the present
 - Explore each reference group on its own first.
 - Integrate the intersectionality of your various social memberships
- Make note of specific incidents that have contributed to the awareness of each reference group membership
- Identify aspects of your awareness that came from personal experiences, media, experts, group experiences, and/or family interactions
 - Distinguish between the various sources as you write about your group memberships
- Examine the significance to your development of being raised in a homogenous class, race, or religious setting, community, family
 - Explore the stated or obvious and unstated issues, even if you had not thought of it before
- Speculate about your lack of awareness in instances where you have no clear history to report
 - Ask yourself, what does it mean to not be consciously aware of race or class?
- Explore the attitudes, values, and beliefs you have internalized as a result of your socialization

Attend to the Link Between Your Social Identities and Your Work as a Healthcare Professional

- Learn about the history, life experiences, cultural values and the hopes, fears, and aspirations of culturally different groups in the United States to optimize your effectiveness as a healer
- Consider how your multiple social identities may affect the relationships you develop with your patients and colleagues and the assessment and intervention process
- Strive to ensure the cultural relevance of your interactions with your patients and the cultural appropriateness of your approach to assessment and intervention
- Understand your patients' presentation within a systemic and sociocultural framework
- Be cognizant of and make use of existing indigenous helping/healing approaches that may already exist in a minority community
- Develop and utilize skills that involve interventions aimed at organizational structures, policies, practices, and regulations within institutions

Process Your Emotions

- Notice and acknowledge your emotional responses and reactions to your multiple group memberships along with your cognitive reflections
- Explore the basis of your positive and negative emotions reactions
- Ascertain the basis of your reactions:
 - Ask yourself, who or what has significantly influenced your emotional and cognitive reactions to cultural differences
- Reflect upon the insights that you can glean from your reactions
- Discuss and speculate upon areas in which you have historically lacked attention or awareness

NOTE

This guide is largely adapted from the following sources:

1. Syllabus on multicultural and diversity issues in a graduate class for clinical psychologists by Kevin Nadal, PhD. (with his permission)

RESOURCES

GENERAL

Kim, A.S., & Del Prado, A. (2019). *It's time to talk (and listen): How to have constructive conversations about race, class, sexuality, ability & gender in a polarized world*. Oakland, CA: New Harbinger Publications.

Sue, D. W., & Sue, D. (2008). *Counseling the culturally diverse: Theory & practice (5th edition)*. New York, NY: John Wiley.

Torino, G.C., Rivera, D.P., Capodilupo, C.M., Nadal, K.L., & Sue, D.W. (2018). *Microaggression theory: Influence and implications*. New York, NY: John Wiley & Sons.

Tseng, W-S., Matthews, D., & Elwyn, T. (2004). *Cultural competence in forensic mental health*. Abingdon-on-Thames, England, UK: Brunner-Routledge.

RACE

Carter, R. T. (2003). Becoming racially and culturally competent: The racial-cultural counseling laboratory *Journal of Multicultural Counseling and Development*, 31, 20-30. <https://doi.org/10.1002/j.2161-1912.2003.tb00527.x>

McIntosh, P. (2020). White privilege: Unpacking the invisible knapsack (1989). In P. McIntosh, *On privilege, fraudulence, and teaching as learning: Selected essays 1981-2019* (pp. 29-34). New York, NY: Routledge.

Pack-Brown, S. P. (1999). Racism and White counselor training: Influence of racial identity theory and research. *Journal of Counseling and Development*, 77, 87-92.

<https://doi.org/10.1002/j.1556-6676.1999.tb02425.x>

Sue, D. W., Lin, A. I., Torino, G. C., Capodilupo, C. M., & Rivera, D. P. (2009). Racial microaggressions and difficult dialogues on race in the classroom. *Cultural Diversity and Ethnic Minority Psychology, 15*, 183-190. <https://doi.org/10.1037/a0014191>

ETHNICITY

Phinney, J. S. (1996). When we talk about American ethnic groups, what do we mean? *American Psychologist, 51*, 918-27. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0003-066x.51.9.918>

GENDER AND SEXUAL ORIENTATION

Baker, N. L. (2006). Feminist psychology in the service of women: Staying engaged without getting married. *Psychology of Women Quarterly, 30*, 1-14. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1471-6402.2006.00257.x>

Mitchell, V. (2010). Developing the therapeutic self: Supervising therapists with lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender clients in the 21st century. *Women & Therapy, 33*, 7-21. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02703140903404671>

RELIGION

Gonsiorek, J. C., Richards, P. S., Pargament, K. I., McMinn, M. R. (2009). Ethical challenges and opportunities at the edge: Incorporating spirituality and religion into psychotherapy. *Professional Psychology: Research and Practice, 40*, 385-395. <https://doi.org/10.1037/a0016488>

SOCIAL CLASS

Smith, L. (2005). Psychotherapy, classism, and the poor: Conspicuous by their Absence. *American Psychologist, 60*, 687-696. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0003-066X.60.7.687>

APPENDIX A: QUESTIONS TO GUIDE GROUP DISCUSSIONS

The following questions are examples of exploring yourself as a cultural being for each specific reference group. Each group of questions must be explored thoroughly in an analytical rather than superficial manner. In general, an adequate exploration of these areas requires follow-up questions and a significant investment of time.

Religion

1. How do I feel about my spiritual or religious group membership? (Distinguish between your family's religion and your own. Talk about **your** religious group.) If

you don't consider yourself to be a member of a particular group, talk about that -
- discuss belonging to the group of people who are not part of a religious group.

2. How have I affirmed my religion or the group to which I belong? (i.e. engaged in activities, actions, or thoughts to conform to group expectations, held views of other religious or non-religious groups.)
3. What generalizations do I believe that others make about me because I do/do not belong to a religious group? List and explain each generalization. (e.g. how do others perceive people in my group?)
4. Are there areas (e.g. personal, interpersonal, social) in which I have not come to terms with who I am with respect to my religious group membership?

Social Class

1. How do I feel about my social class group membership? (Identify your class standing, i.e. poverty, working class, middle class, owning class, etc. Try not to discuss only material things but focus on the types of thoughts and behaviors that are expected of you and how these expectations have shaped who you are and how you see others)
2. How have I affirmed my social class group membership? (i.e. engaged in activities, actions, or thoughts to conform to group expectations, held views of groups.)
3. What generalizations do I believe that others make about me because of my social class group membership? List and explain each generalization. (e.g. how do others perceive people in my group?)
4. Are there areas (e.g. personal, interpersonal, social) in which I have not come to terms with who I am with respect to my social class group membership?

Gender

1. How do I feel about my gender? (Please be careful not to discuss your birth sex, but rather how you have been socialized to be part of one gender).
2. How have I affirmed my gender? (i.e. engaged in gender normative activities, actions, or thoughts)
3. What generalizations do I believe that others make about me because of my gender? List and explain each generalization. (e.g. how do others perceive people in my group?)
4. Are there areas (e.g. personal, interpersonal, social) in which I have not come to terms with who I am with respect to my gender?

Sexual Orientation

1. How do I feel about my sexual orientation?
2. How have I affirmed my sexual orientation? (i.e. engaged in activities, actions, or thoughts to conform to group expectations, held views of groups.)
3. What generalizations do I believe that others make about me because of my sexual orientation? List and explain each generalization. (e.g. how do others perceive people in my group?)
4. Are there areas (e.g. personal, interpersonal, social) in which I have not come to terms with who I am with respect to my sexual orientation?

Ethnicity

1. How do I feel about my ethnic group membership? (Please be careful to discuss your own ethnic group and not your parent's ethnic group)
2. How have I affirmed my ethnic group membership? (i.e. engaged in activities, actions, or thoughts to conform to group expectations, held views of other groups.)
3. What generalizations do I believe that others make about me because of my ethnic group membership? List and explain each generalization. (e.g. how do others perceive people in my group?)
4. Are there areas (e.g. personal, interpersonal, social) in which I have not come to terms with who I am with respect to my ethnic group membership?

Race

1. How do I feel about my racial group membership?
2. How has colorism informed my experience of my racial group membership? What has it meant in my life to be a person of my skin color? Give specific examples.
3. How have I affirmed my racial group membership? (i.e. engaged in activities, actions, or thoughts to conform to group expectations, held views of other religious or non-religious groups.)
4. What generalizations do I believe that others make about me because of my racial group membership? List and explain each generalization. (e.g. how do others perceive people in my group?)
5. Are there areas (e.g. personal, interpersonal, social) in which I have not come to terms with who I am with respect to my racial group membership?

APPENDIX B: QUESTIONS TO GUIDE AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

1. Who are you as a racial, ethnic, gendered, social class, sexual, and religious/spiritual being? When did you realize that you were a member of your particular identity groups (i.e., racial, ethnic, gender, etc.)? Give specific examples. What role did your family upbringing play? What role did your friends play? What role did your education play? How has society influenced you with respect to your understanding of your identity group memberships? In other words, try to link your development with respect to each of your multiple group identities (i.e., racial, ethnic, gender, social class, religion/spirituality) and the acquisition of attitudes on each of your multiple group identities with your developmental history. Remember to speak about each identity group separately in separate sections of your sketch and to give each identity group equal attention.
2. What does it mean for you to be a racial being? What does it mean to be a Person of Color? What does it mean to be White? Give specific examples. In most cases, this question will evoke not only cognitive inquiry, but also emotional responses. It is critical to explore both cognitive and affective bases or your

responses and reactions to your multiple group memberships.

3. What are your biases, prejudices, worldviews, and assumptions about human behavior and culturally different and similar others? Give specific examples. Do you think that you are/are not you bigoted, a racist, sexist, classist, homophobic, etc.? Do you believe holding negative feelings about group memberships different from your own is acceptable, understandable, inappropriate, what? How have your biases, assumptions, stereotypes, etc. been manifested in your personal and professional life? Where do you think they came from?
4. How do you understand your identity groups? For example, what does it mean to be Asian in America, in Asia, Europe, or wherever you were raised? How do you perceive yourself as a member of your identity groups? Are you a person who believes that people from other religions are practicing the 'wrong' faith? Do you believe that women are superior to men? How do your perceptions of women and men relate to your religious beliefs, cultural/ethnic values, racial dynamics of your reference groups? Your social class? If you are White, can you understand the worldviews of People of Color? If you are a Person of Color can you understand the worldviews of White people? If so, can you articulate it? If not, how do you understand not being able to articulate your racial identity?
5. How are your cultural identities likely to affect your clinical work? What aspects or characteristics do you have that are likely to hinder your ability to work with culturally different/diverse groups? What aspects or characteristics do you have that are likely to facilitate your ability to work effectively with culturally different/diverse groups? How multiculturally competent are you? What do you need to work on? How will you become culturally competent? What experiences do you need and how can you actively arrange to obtain them?