

Pluralism and Privilege

What is pluralism?

- A state in society in which members of diverse ethnic, racial, religious, or social groups maintain and develop their traditional culture or special interest within the confines of a common civilization (Merriam-Webster dictionary).
- In other words, pluralism is when people who are different from one another are allowed to be this way and not judged or discriminated against for their differences.
- This is NOT saying, “We are all the same.” While this is often something people say when are trying to be accepting, this actually erases cultural identities and implies that being different is a bad thing.
- Pluralism is about honoring and celebrating differences, not assimilation.

What is privilege?

“Privilege exists when one group has something of value that is denied to others simply because of the groups they belong to, rather than because of anything they’ve done or failed to do.” –Peggy McIntosh

Some privileges in our society:

- White Privilege
- Male Privilege
- Straight Privilege
- And many more!

What to do if you have privilege:

When learning you have privilege, it is easy to get defensive. After all, you didn’t choose to have privilege. What are you supposed to do about it? Actually, there is plenty that you can do in order to not abuse your privilege.

- Acknowledge your privilege. Own up to it. You have been taught to not notice it, so you need to make an effort to see it and learn about it.
- Be willing to rethink what you thought you knew to be true. Listen when people in marginalized groups talk to you about issues.
- It is okay to make mistakes; do not allow that to hold you back from being an ally.
- Remember that people in marginalized groups do not owe you anything for being an ally.
- Help create an inclusive environment that is respectful to all.
- Align yourself with those who lack privilege, instead of just taking the lead from them.

References:

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