

White Culture Characteristics and Possible Antidotes Discussion Guide

Instructions:

- Individually review “White Culture Characteristics” and “Examples” (2-3 minutes)
- Share personal examples of contributions to white supremacy culture
- Individually review “Possible Antidotes” (2-3 minutes)
- Share examples of your behaviors that work against the white culture dominance
- Make sure everyone has a chance to share!

White Culture Characteristic	Examples	Possible Antidotes
I. White culture defines what is considered normal; it creates the standard for judging values	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assuming there is a “best way” to be a good parent, create a stable family, and raise a well-behaved child. • Believing that only a certain kind of leadership is effective. • Thinking there is one “right way” to do things. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Realize the validity of each person’s and culture’s worldview. • Accept that there are many ways to get to the same goal. • Notice when others do things differently and explore how those different ways might improve my approach.
II. White culture rewards a focus on the individual (not groups).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rewarding independence and autonomy vs. group process and contribution. • Believing an individual is in control of their environment. “You get what you deserve.” • Valuing competition more highly than cooperation. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promote the value in community and the importance of teamwork. • Make sure credit is given to all who participate in an effort, not just the leaders or most public person. • Deemphasize competition in favor of cooperation.
III. White culture believes those in power have a right to emotional and psychological comfort. It often defines the “other” behaviors as dangerous and/or deviant.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fearing or avoiding conflict and emotion. • Marginalizing or scapegoating those who cause (white defined) discomfort or conflict. • Viewing criticism as threatening, inappropriate, or rude. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Welcome discomfort as an opportunity for growth and learning. • Don’t take everything personally. • Don’t require those who raise hard issues to raise them in “acceptable” ways. • Work on my own defensiveness.
IV. White culture values objective, rational, logical thinking over emotional, intuitive, and process focused ways of knowing.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Valuing results over process. “If you can’t measure it – it is not of value.” • Indulging in “either/or” thinking. • Believing that there is such a thing as being objective or neutral. • Valuing the written word while minimizing or ignoring other ways in which information gets shared. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create both process and results goals for endeavors. • Notice “either/or” language and push for discussion of more alternatives. • Honor emotional intelligence. • Seek opportunities to learn from others’ ways of thinking.

White Culture Characteristic	Examples	Possible Antidotes
<p>V. White culture believes that those with power are capable of making decisions for and in the interests of those without power.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Feeling threatened and defensive when anyone suggests changes in how things should be done. • Overlooking the value in the culture of other/different communities and cultures. • Seeing little, if any, value around sharing power. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Understand the link between defensiveness and fear (of losing power, losing face, losing privilege). • Admit that I have learning to do about other culture's ways of seeing and doing. • Never assume that I know what's best for a community without establishing meaningful relationships and engaging in dialogues. • Choose to create shared power solutions.

Based on [Dismantling Racism: A Workbook for Social Change Groups](#), by Kenneth Jones and Tema Okun, ChangeWork, 2001