

FAST FACTS



25-50
People



100
Minutes



\$0



High Risk
Level

First Memories, Class Indicators, and Class Caucuses

Adapted with permission from *Teaching for Diversity and Social Justice*

Purpose of Activity: Participants will begin to explore the impact of class on their personal lives, institutions, and culture.

Objectives/Learning Outcomes: This exercise helps participants understand concepts about class and classism? Moreover, this exercise helps participants understand systemic dynamics of classism.

Ground Rules:

- Be fully present and participate at your own comfort level – challenge by choice.
 - Follow up - What does it mean to be “fully present”?
 - Follow up - What does “challenge by choice” mean?
- Push yourself outside of your comfort zone – the most learning happens when we are a little bit uncomfortable.
- Listen respectfully, share air time, and encourage others to participate.
- It’s ok for us all to be at different places with the things we discuss today.
- Show respect for one another’s beliefs, values, and experiences.
- Respect and maintain privacy.

Disclaimer:

- If as facilitators you are not a member of a subordinated group (low SES) discussed during this program, be sure to acknowledge that. Frame the conversation that you do not understand what it means to be part of that group from personal experience, nor are you an expert because this is the topic of the program. You are simply trying to be an ally by doing education on the topic.
- If someone DOES attend the program who is of the subordinated group, be sure not to single them out for the “low SES perspective,” for example, stare at them to judge their reaction, or basically put them on the spot. They should be treated like every other student, and invite everyone to share/participate as much as she/he/ze is comfortable.

Suggested Time Allocation:

- Introduction: 5 Minutes
- Learning Community Guidelines: 10 Minutes
- Instructions: 5 Minutes
- First Memories and Class Indicators Activity: 30 Minutes
- Class Caucuses Activity: 45 Minutes
- Overall Processing and Conclusion: 10 Minutes



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Facilitation Guide:

- **Introduction**

- Thank the participants for coming to the program and introduce the program summary and learning outcomes.
- Establish that this is an activity that may trigger certain emotions.

- **Learning Community Guidelines**

- Establish learning community guidelines in order to create a safe learning environment, since the participants will be revealing personal details about themselves.

- **Instructions**

- Divide the group into smaller groups of 3 people. Ask individuals to partner with people they do not know well.
- Ask participants to take turns answering and listening to the following questions. Have each person speak for 3 minutes without being interrupted. Keep track of time and tell them you will inform them when it is the next persons turn to speak.
- Ask participants to reconvene after the questions have concluded.
- Provide each group 5 minutes to report back on the four different questions.

- **Large Group Questions**

- What is the first memory you have of someone you thought was of a more privileged or “higher” class than you? Why did you think so?
- What is the first memory you have of someone you thought was of a less privileged/”lower” class than you? Why did you think so?

Processing:

- Ask participants to reconvene.
- Ask for volunteers to share the memories they discussed in order to illicit a variety of examples.
- The facilitator should note factors that indicate different class positions, and write these on newsprint. The list should include indicators such as income, education, housing, occupation, need to work, neighborhood, language, assets or wealth, appearance, possessions, and leisure.

Class Caucuses:

- Inform participants that this next activity will give them an opportunity to spend time with others who have similar class backgrounds, and to notice what similarities and differences might exist among class caucuses.
- Ask the participants to self-identify in groups of three classes (Low, Middle, and High)(enough resources to meet one’s family’s needs, not enough to meet one’s

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family's needs, more than enough resources to meet one's family's needs). Inform participants that if their current class has been different than that over periods of their life, they can choose the group that they identified most with for a majority of their life.

- Once people are in their groups, inform the participants that they should select a note taker who will be able to report back to the whole group.
- Tell the participants they will discuss four questions, and should spend about 7.5 minutes per question (30 minutes total).

Caucus Questions

- What did you gain (knowledge, skills, community support networks) from your class of origin? What was good about your class experience growing up? What did you gain from it?
- What was challenging about your class experience growing up? What was limiting about it?
- What did you not want others to say, do, or think about your group?
- How did race, ethnicity, and/or immigration status impact your experience of class?

Processing Questions:

- What did you learn about class and classism from this experience?
- Which questions, if any, hurt? Why?
- What can you do with this information in the future?

Possible Facilitation Issues: This activity can trigger challenging questions and emotions from the participants. The facilitator should be experienced with and prepared for these situations. This activity should be done only in venues in which the facilitator feels comfortable handling issues that may arise.