

Athletes As Leaders



Session 3: Privilege & Oppression

Make sure you have:

- Pens or pencils, scrap pieces of paper and waste basket for privilege activity during “Warm Up”
- Prize for privilege activity, i.e. a treat for the whole group
- Technology to show YouTube video during “Work Out”
- Ball to throw during “Cool Down”

Warm Up

Introduce topic. (30 sec)

Welcome! Last week we talked about gender stereotypes. Gender stereotypes are related to oppression. Today we are going to talk more in depth about the ways that people can experience privilege or oppression, and gender is one of them.

Play privilege activity: (8 min)

Facilitator Notes

Designate at least 2 people to be assistants during this activity. Tell them ahead of time (out of earshot) that their role is to distract, delay, and interfere with the athletes in the back rows. For example, ask to see their paper after they write their name, and say they are disqualified because their name is not written neatly enough. Or they can try to block the shot when the person is throwing their wad, or disqualify them for throwing with their left hand, or standing up to throw, etc. The assistants can also offer advantages to the athletes in the front rows, such as giving them an extra piece of paper to try again if they miss, or picking up their paper and letting them try again.

1. Have athletes sit in rows, either on the floor or in chairs.
2. Place a recycle bin or waste basket a few feet in front of the front row.
3. Give each participant a piece of paper, and a pen or pencil. If you run out, give less markers to back row and tell them they will have to share.
4. Explain the instructions for the activity:
We have a valuable prize for each person who can throw their paper ball into the basket. [Show prize]. When I say go, you are going to write your name neatly on your

piece of paper, then wad it into a ball and try to throw it in the basket. No matter what happens, just try your best. I know everyone in here can do this!

5. As the athletes are writing their names and starting to wad up their papers, let the back rows throw first, then the middle rows, then those in the front. This will allow the athletes to follow along with what is happening. The assistants should be blatantly encouraging the front row to be successful, and the back row to fail (as explained above in "Facilitator Notes").
6. Announce the "winners," which are the ones who made it into the basket.
7. Debrief the activity. *How did it feel for those who were in the front? How did it feel for those who were in the back? What did you think about the design of the game?*

Offer definition & write on board: (1 min)

OPPRESSION = SYSTEMS THAT GIVE ONE GROUP MORE POWER AND ACCESS+ ONE GROUP LESS POWER AND ACCESS

The systems that give one group more power offer them access to make decisions, policies, laws; and give them certain privileges, advantages, and access to resources. In a room, people are more likely to listen to them.

When a system gives one group more power, it also gives another group less power. The other group is often given fewer resources, more challenges and obstacles, and less of a voice in making decisions, policies, and laws. Looking at it this way, we can see that oppressed groups are valued less in society. This can lead to higher rates of discrimination and violence against them.

In our society, people experience different levels of privilege and oppression depending on their gender, their race, their family's level of wealth, their sexual orientation, their physical and cognitive abilities, their age, and many other factors.

Introduce & Show Video: (4 min)

We are going to watch a video now about privilege and oppression. It's a cartoon written by Chescaleigh and animated by Kat Blaque about a snail and a caterpillar. While you're watching this video, think about how it relates to what we just discussed about privilege and oppression.

"Sometimes You're a Caterpillar" (3:19)

<https://youtu.be/hRiWgx4sHGg>

Work Out

Discussion Questions: (3 min)

- ① *Why is it sometimes difficult for people to see their own privilege, like the caterpillar?*
[Possible answers: their way of life is “normal” to them; most people look like them; they are in the majority; they don’t know it any other way; they have their own struggles, so it’s hard to see when they have been privileged too].
- ② *Why is it sometimes difficult to see the oppression that other groups experience (like the caterpillar understanding the snail’s challenges)?* [Possible answers: they don’t take the time to listen or observe; they are not that close with other people who are oppressed; it’s not personally affecting them; they blame challenges on the individual, rather than the system].

Talking Points: (2 min)

- » *As you have seen in the video and from our game, it is the way that systems are designed that can keep people who have less power at a disadvantage and people with more power at an advantage. When a person is part of a group with less power, it is because institutions and systems give privileges to some groups over others, not because there is anything 'wrong' with the person.*
- » *Sometimes a person's oppressed identities are obvious or visible. Sometimes they are not. For instance, you can't necessarily tell a person's sexual orientation or whether they have a disability just by looking at them. You don't know what kind of things another person is experiencing, so it's important to not assume you know what they are going through.*
- » *Especially when you have privilege, it is important to be aware of it. You can make space for other voices to be heard, and advocate for fairness. Follow the lead of people who are most affected by a certain issue. For example, if you want to help make the school more accessible and inclusive to people with disabilities, start by listening to people with disabilities. Especially when you have privilege, it's important to challenge things that are unfair or hurting others, even if it hasn't personally affected you.*
- » ***So here is a challenge for you...** Think about the ways that you may be privileged or oppressed. Listen to people who have been left out, harmed, or discriminated against, so you can more deeply understand an issue. Educate yourself about systems of oppression.*
- » ***As student athletes and leaders...** it is important speak out against discrimination, unfair systems, violence, and oppression, and to work toward justice and fairness for all people.*

Cool Down

Team Talk: (4 min)

Now it is time for you to lead the Team Talk! Let's get in a circle and get ready to pass the ball. We are going to think of things that you can all do as student leaders & athletes. Hopefully these will be things everyone in the group can agree to do, when you are interacting with people on your team, at school, on social media, or in the community. We are hoping they will become the new team norms that will help you take action as leaders in the community.

This week we are going to brainstorm ways that we can challenge oppression:

- ① *Please fill in the blank. Would like to hear a lot of voices on this one. At [_____ High School], our community should be _____. [Possible answers: "inclusive," "respectful," "fair," "open-minded," "non-judgmental"].*
- ② *What can you do if you see an issue at school where a group of people is being treated unfairly or people are being targeted? [Possible issues: low income students not having access to proper equipment to participate in sports; tracking systems that leave out students of color in advanced classes; or graffiti at school with hate speech. Possible actions: talk to your school counselor, teachers, and/or principal; get together a group of students to write a letter, sign a petition, or make signs; listen to the students experiencing the issue for how you can help advocate for change.]*
- ③ *What does it look like for you to be a supporter (or an ally) for people who are experiencing challenges or obstacles?*

Thank you for all of your participation and sharing. I know this is a big topic and I appreciate you bringing your open minds together to discuss a complicated issue. It's time to break for the day (or get to practice).

Close the circle with a team cheer.