

Common Patterns of Whites

Directions: review these common group dynamics:

- a. Check-off any dynamics which you have observed or heard about.
- b. Make a note next to the different dynamics that you have personally participated in.

Some/Many Whites Tend to (consciously and unconsciously):

1. believe they have “earned” what they have, rather than acknowledge the extensive unearned advantages they receive; claim that if people of color just worked harder...
2. not notice the daily indignities that people of color experience; deny and rationalize them away with PLEs (perfectly logical explanations)
3. work to maintain the status quo and protect the advantages and privileges they receive
4. believe that white cultural norms, practices and values are superior and better
5. internalize negative stereotypes and believe that whites are smarter and superior to POC
6. want people of color to conform and assimilate to white cultural norms and practices
7. accept and feel safer around people of color who have assimilated and are “closer to white”
8. blame people of color for the barriers and challenges they experience; believe that if they “worked harder” they could “pull themselves up by their bootstraps”
9. believe that people of color are not competent and are only hired/promoted to fill quotas
10. interrupt and talk over people of color
11. resent taking direction from a person of color
12. dismiss and minimize frustrations of people of color and categorize the person raising issues as militant, angry, having an “attitude,” working their agenda, not a team player...
13. focus on their “good intent” as whites, rather than on the negative impact of their behavior
14. focus on how much progress we have made, rather than on what still needs to change
15. want people of color to “get over it” and move on quickly
16. get defensive when people of color express frustration with racism
17. “walk on eggshells” and act more distant and formal with people of color
18. live segregated from people of color and rarely develop authentic cross-racial relationships
19. exaggerate the level of intimacy they have with individual people of color

20. fear that they will be seen and “found out” as a racist, having racial prejudice
21. focus on individualism and refuse to acknowledge cultural and institutional racism
22. pressure and punish whites who actively work to dismantle racism to conform and collude with white racism; criticize, gossip about, and find fault with white change agents
23. expect people of color to be the “diversity expert” and address racism as their unpaid job
24. minimize, ignore, and discount the competencies and contributions of people of color
25. rephrase and reword the comments of people of color
26. ask people of color to repeat what they have just said
27. assume the white person is in charge/the leader; assume people of color are in service roles
28. rationalize away racist treatment of people of color as individual incidents or the result of something the person of color did/failed to do
29. dismiss racism when shared by people of color with comments such as: That happens to me too...You’re too sensitive...That happened because of _____, it has nothing to do with race!
30. judge a person of color as over-reacting and too emotional when they are responding to the cumulative impact of multiple recent racist incidents
31. accuse people of color of “playing the race card” whenever they challenge racism; instead of exploring the probability that racist attitudes and beliefs are operating
32. if racially confronted by a person of color, shut down and focus on what to avoid saying or doing in the future, rather than engaging and learning from the interaction
33. look to people of color for direction, education, coaching on how to act and what not to do
34. compete with other whites to be “the good white.” the best ally, the friend of people of color
35. aggressively confront other white people and distance yourself from your own racist patterns
36. seek approval, validation, and recognition from people of color
37. if confronted by a person of color, view it as an “attack” and focus on HOW they engaged me, not my original comments or behaviors
38. disengage if feel any anxiety or discomfort; remain silent in discussions of race and racism
39. avoid confronting other whites on their racist attitudes and behaviors
40. when trying to help people of color, feel angry if they don’t enthusiastically appreciate you
41. believe there is one “right” way or “fit”, meaning “my way” or the “white way”