

MATERIALS for SESSION 1: Readings, Reminders, Agenda, Shared Agreements

Why are We Here and Personal Experience with Race

We open the series with some materials and exercises to help frame the journey ahead. We hope to motivate and sustain your commitment to this work and place you in the good company of other white people who are turning toward racial suffering with wisdom, compassion and the resolve to co-create its end.

Preparation

Core Resources -- please read these before your meeting:

- [Healing the Broken Body of Sangha](#) by Ruth King
- [Who Invented White People](#) by Gregory Jay
- X Birth of a White Nation, Jacqueline Battalor
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=riVAuC0dnP4>
- [Ways of Being White](#) by Gary Howard
- America Needs an Education in Whiteness
<https://slate.com/human-interest/2019/02/white-history-month-whiteness-education.html>
- [Racism as Dharma Doorway - Letter to White Sangha](#) by Kristin Barker, one of the creators of the Spirit Rock curriculum.
- [Not Somewhere Else, But Here](#) by Rev. Dr. Rebecca Parker
- <https://beta.prx.org/stories/208838> (8 minutes) by Ijeoma Oluo -- "a Seattle-based writer, speaker & internet yeller. She was named one of the most influential people in Seattle, by Seattle Magazine. She's the Editor-At-Large at The Establishment - a media platform run and funded by women."
- From the National Museum of African American History and Culture. Talking About Race <https://nmaahc.si.edu/learn/talking-about-race/topics/being-antiracist>

Additional Resources:

If you did not read these before the intro session, please do so

- Watch the video [Race: The Power of an Illusion](#). \$4.99 on Vimeo. The message in this documentary is fundamental to session one. If you prefer a free version you can access it via the digital services library Kanopy. For those with a Washington County or Multnomah County library card, log in to your library > Digital Library > Kanopy.

Tools of Practice:

We suggest you listen to one of the Lovingkindness audio meditation instructions. There are several that you can check out, choose one and try it. Feel free to peruse these websites for something that suits you best. You can go back to these throughout the course.

- [UC San Diego Center for Mindfulness Guided Meditations](#)
- <http://marc.ucla.edu/mindful-meditations>

Facilitation

Your group will choose a facilitator at the beginning of this meeting. The facilitator role will rotate each meeting. If you can't decide who will facilitate, have the person facilitate whose first name is closest to the letter Z in the alphabet.

The facilitator's role is to guide the group through the proposed agenda. The facilitator is not expected to have any special knowledge about the topic, and responds to each question as a participant. The facilitator's role incorporates three jobs:

- Make sure all voices are heard. We suggest "going around" to have each person speak during most sections of the agenda, rather than open discussion.
- Keep time and keep the group moving through the agenda.
- Ensure that a facilitator is set for the next meeting

A copy of the agenda and the Shared Agreements will be made available as hand-outs for each group / facilitator:

Agenda

A. 6:00 - 6:05 Large Group - Sit (settle in and sit for a few minutes)

B. 6:05 - 6:15 Review Agenda, Group Assignments / Locations (10 minutes)

IN SMALL GROUPS:

C. 6:15 - 6:25 Discuss Shared Agreements / Add Communication Guidelines that will support your group (10 minutes)

- a. Select someone to take notes during this section
- b. Start with a go around where each person shares 1 or 2 guidelines that feel important to their participation in your group
- c. Open to discussion to refine any guidelines
- d. Confirm that all members can abide by the group's guidelines, or at least be open to practicing with them

D. 6:25 - 7:25 Mindful Sharing (60 minutes)

- a. Instruction: Mindful sharing involves each participant sharing from personal experience. There is no discussion or cross-talk during this time period, only personal sharing.
- b. *Each person in the group can share 2-3 minutes on each question (gauge the time depending on the number of people in your group)*
 - i. What motivates you to be a part of this process?
 - ii. What concerns, fears, or other feelings arise as this conversation opens?
 - iii. Do you / when did you first recognize yourself as having a racial identity?
 - iv. What are your responses to the readings & material?

E. 7:25 - 7:30 Sit (5 minutes)

F. 7:30 - 7:45 Group Reflection (15 minutes)

- a. Instruction: Group Reflection is like Mindful Sharing in that there is no discussion or cross-talk, however the focus is on what kind of experience the participants had during the meeting rather than on the content covered.
- b. Each person in the group can share 2-3 minutes about what it was like to participate in the group (gauge time based on number of people in the group)
PROMPT: What was it like to engage in *Mindful Sharing* today? How has this been for you so far?

G. 7:45 - 7:50 Next Meeting (5 minutes)

- a. How did your meeting logistics work? Any changes you would like to try for the next meeting?
- b. Who will facilitate?

H. 7:50 - 8 Return to Large Group, Sit for a few minutes to close

SHARED AGREEMENTS

Create a nonjudgmental space.

Judgment can shut people down, distort the truth, and even serve as an escape from uncomfortable realities. We commit ourselves to refraining from judgment and turn instead to descriptive language when speaking about our personal experience, the effects of particular actions, and our personal or collective values. It is amazing how powerful simply speaking the truth can be.

Taking a nonjudgmental attitude also means “not judging ourselves for judging”. When we notice judgment, we commit ourselves to simply acknowledging it and turning back to descriptive language.

Share from personal experience.

While some cross talk and discussion can be helpful, White Awake encourages people engaged in anti-racist group work to prioritize speaking from personal experience. This means refraining from offering unsolicited advice or criticism and instead speaking directly about our own emotions, experiences, and values.

Respect time limitations.

Anytime we come together to work as a group there is a limit to the time we have. Beginning and ending on time is an important way to show respect for one another's commitments, and it helps participants relax and show up for the work at hand. During the process of group sharing, it is important for each individual to respect the amount of time they have to speak. Talking longer than is allowed for takes away from other participants' ability to share and decreases the diversity of voices heard in a group space.

Acknowledge that “we are all learning”.

When coming together as a group, there will always be some people with more racial experience or awareness than others. Furthermore, your group may turn to White Awake for consulting or bring in a trainer or some other “expert” to supplement your work. It is important to acknowledge, from the very beginning, that regardless of experience or expertise, everybody is learning. No one has a monopoly on the truth. Everyone has valuable experience and wisdom to share.

Acknowledge that “our experience is complex” without denying the reality of racism or its effects on our lives

Our identities and our experiences are complex. We have come together to look at how we relate to race as white people, but we can never completely separate our racial experience from other pieces of our identity (such as gender, sexual orientation, educational background, and economic class). While working together at this time, we will attempt to honor this complexity without being distracted from the fact that race is a social phenomena that has very specific implications for us as members of the racial category defined as “white”.