Basic Anti-Oppression Theory

Oppression Panel
Benefits and Facilitation Options

Benefits:
- Offers personal perspectives of people who experience oppression
- Allows participants or others to be the “trainers”
- Gives the trainer a break, and the participants a break from the trainer!

Time Required: 20 – 30 minutes

Ideal Group Size: Any

Support Materials: List of panel questions.

Key Instructions:
1. Invite participants from the training or outside panelists to serve on a short panel to discuss their experiences of oppression. You will probably want to be selective rather than do an “open” request.

2. If you decide to ask for volunteers from the training group, read list of oppressed identities once through with participants just listening. Ask if there are participants who belong to one of the groups listed who would volunteer to speak from their own experience (knowing they don’t speak for all people in that group) as a member of that group. Read through list again slowly in order to give time for people to volunteer and take a chair. (List of groups: Queer (or lesbian, gay, bi, etc.), Trans, Person not born in US, African-American/African/Black, Asian-American/Asian, Native American/Indigenous, Latino/a, Middle Eastern, Pacific Islander, Person with a disability, Jewish, Muslim, Woman, Poor/working class, Fat/Person of size). You may add other groups. Remind participants this is not a complete list of oppressed people.

3. Prepare them by sharing the list of panel questions.
4. Ask panelists if there are any ground rules in addition to the training ground rules that they’d like to establish before the exercise.
5. Remind panelists to avoid blaming statements, use “I” statements and speak from their own experience.
6. Ask participants to simply listen and absorb the information. They are not to comment, argue, or ask questions of the panelists before, during or after the panel presentation.
7. Facilitate the discussion to ensure panelists are following the ground rules of the training and the panel.
Key Points:

- Feelings of guilt, anger, sadness, etc. will probably come up during this exercise. It's important for the facilitator to allow space for all of these feelings, as long as they are not acted out in a harmful way.

- Everyone can probably share at least one experience of oppression. Try to find that shared place before getting mad.

- Hearing real stories moves participants out of their heads and into their hearts, which is why this exercise can be difficult. Remember, unlearning oppression is not easy.

Questions Set 2:

1. What do you like about being ------?

2. What do you not like about being------?

3. What do you never want to hear again about----?

4. What do you want people to know about --------?