Together we make equity a reality

with Equity Solutions – equitysolutionsvt@gmail.com
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Goal

Move one step closer to equitable workplaces by learning and practicing strategies for talking about economic inequality and across class differences.
Beliefs

“Nothing About Us Without Us”

We are all in this together, but it impacts us each differently

Moving from deficit to strengths based thinking
Class at the Workplace

➔ Thinking that I don’t understand, perhaps don’t care about struggles because of my class position.
➔ I’m in the offices and class comes up when connecting or trying to connect with employees in manufacturing. How can we better create an environment of connectivity within a highly stratified workplace?
➔ How do we accept and recognize class diversity when that can bring discomfort to our inclusive movement in terms of gender and race?
➔ How do we build workplaces where lower and middle class people don’t feel out of place from the upper classes?
➔ How do people best engage with class issues while respecting those who have less class privilege than the norm in a group?
➔ What is the best bonding exercise you have for getting people to feel comfortable and open up?
➔ How does the system of pay secrecy reinforce class divide and privilege?
Class definition

relative social rank in terms of income, wealth, status, and power

a group of people who share similar roles in the economic system as particular kinds of workers, owners, and/or buyers/sellers/traders/consumers

culture, knowledge, skills, and networks that come along with being part of a particular class group

class is closely intertwined with other forms of hierarchy, especially race and gender
**WEALTH INEQUALITY IN AMERICA**

**OWNING CLASS**
- 1% of US population (~3 million people)
- $35-39% of US wealth
- Annual household income ~at least $300k
- Wealth = over $3,000,000
- May work...but don’t need to (living off dividends/financial instruments)

**PROFESSIONAL/MANAGERIAL CLASS**
- 19% of the US population (most of the wealthiest 1/5)
- 55% of US wealth
- Annual household income ~$100k-$300k
- Wealth = over $344k
- High-paid professionals i.e. CEOs, corporate managers, lawyers, doctors, financiers

**POOR**
- 40% of the US population
- Annual household income under $40k
- Zero or negative net wealth
- Low status workers, people on public assistance, retirees, people who are unemployed, homeless, incarcerated...

**BUFFER CLASS**
- 40% of the US population (lower middle class, upper working class)
- 5-8% of US wealth
- Annual household income ~$40k-$100k
- Wealth = over $56k
- Teachers, social workers, police, nurses, skilled tradespeople
What is your class identity (growing up and now) and how does that show up in your work?
Systems impact our stories.
AND
Stories of lived experience change systems.
Race & Class are Connected

Historical & present day policies and practices benefit people with white skin and harm people with black and brown skin.
Trauma and Social Location

Adverse Childhood Experiences*  
lnoculation (disease, disability, and social problems)  
Adoption of health-risk behaviours  
Social, emotional, & cognitive impairment  
Adverse childhood experiences

Historical Trauma/Embodiment

Early Death  
Burden of disease, distress, criminalization, stigmatization  
Coping  
Allostatic load, disrupted neurological development  
Complex trauma/ACE  
Race/social conditions/local context  
Generational embodiment/historical trauma

*http://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/acestudy/pyramid.html

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Recognizing Strengths

- Empathy
- Connect Really Quickly
- Practicing Humility
- Vulnerability
- Give more generously
- Non-linear thinking
- Optimism
- Cooperation over Individualism
- Reading non-verbal cues
Role Play #1
Role Play #2
Communication Tools

➔ Vulnerability: Know and share your story - connect authentically.

➔ Voice & Choice: What could you say to someone to invite them in to contribute to a decision? Strengths-based thinking.

➔ Assume best intentions and attend to impact.

➔ Accountability.
6 Principles for Trauma Informed Practice (SAMHSA)

- Emotional and Physical Safety
- Trustworthy & Transparency
- Peer-Support
- Collaboration and Mutuality
- Empowerment – Voice and Choice
- Historical, Cultural, and Gender Issues
Applying the Tools - In Pairs (8 min)

Think of a few ways you can use these tools in your workplace.

• **Vulnerability:** Know and Share your story.

• **Voice & Choice:** What could you say to someone to invite them in to contribute to a decision?

• **Assume best intentions and attend to impact.**

• **Accountability.**
• **Next steps - one action**
• **Resources**
• **Evaluation**
Together we make equity a reality

Training & Consulting for Racial and Economic Equity

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