



Deepening Difficult Dialogues: Tactics and Tasks for Talking about Race

The **Privilege And Subjugated Task Model** is a power/privilege-sensitive framework designed to defuse contentious conversations and to facilitate constructive engagement across the divides of race and other dimensions of diversity. The model is predicated on the notion that power and privilege are two salient factors underpinning the creation, maintenance, and resolution of racially based conversations.

The model is based on the following assumptions:

- 1) Effective racial conversations are comprised of four critical developmental stages: Preparation, Encounter, Engagement, and Execution.
 - **Preparation**—refers to the systematic and deliberate efforts devoted to learning about race; enhancing the will and skill to participate in conversations; and learning about oneself as a *racial being*.
 - **Encounter**—refers to placing oneself in situations to have racially-based conversations as well as sharpening one's ability to recognize situations that warrant a conversation or engagement regarding race.
 - **Engagement**—refers to the willingness to lean into conversations about race fully, uninhibitedly, and as non-defensively as possible.
 - **Execution**—refers to demonstrating the will and applying the skills necessary to foster and support a meaningful conversation about race.
- 2) Effective racial conversations require “will (*intestinal fortitude*) and skill” (*application of effective techniques*) on the part of all participants.
- 3) Emotional and physical space must be created and maintained for racial conversations to be effectively executed.
- 4) Power and privilege are critical unexamined dimensions in racial relationships and conversations.
- 5) Power is relational, contextual, and inevitably inequitably distributed.
- 6) Whiteness (Eurocentrism) and the possession of white skin are privileges that assign considerable power to those who possess these traits.
- 7) The degree of responsibility and accountability one has to a relationship should be proportional to the relative power and privilege that one possesses.



Assumptions continued:

- 8) Critical *self-examination*, *self-interrogation*, and *self-reflection* are critical.
 - **Self-Examination**—the willingness to openly explore one’s racial identity, background, and history.
 - **Self-Interrogation**—the willingness and ability to critically question who one believes one’s self to be racially, as well as who one is, based on one’s upbringing, racial socialization process, internalization of racialized messages, authentic cross-racial experiences, etc.
 - **Self-Reflection**—the willingness and ability to critically think about all of the racially based information that has been discovered, uncovered, named, and that contribute to one’s sense of self as a racial being.
- 9) The development of a high Self In Relationship to Other (SIRO) quotient is integral to having progressive race conversations.
- 10) Effective racial conversations require participants to adhere to a series of tasks that are commensurate with their social location within the relationship.

The Tasks of the Privileged

- 1 Differentiate between *intentions* and *consequences* and always start with an acknowledgement of the latter.
- 2 Avoid the overt and covert negation of subjugated conversations and disclosures.
- 3 Avoid reactive reflexes—acts of relational retrenchment, rebuttal, and retribution.
- 4 Avoid the issuance of prescriptions.
- 5 Avoid speaking from the KNOE (Knowledgeable, Neutral, Objective, Expert) position.

The Tasks of the Subjugated

- 1 Challenge *silencing* and *voicelessness*.
- 2 Regulate and re-channel rage.
- 3 Engage in a process of *exhaling*.
- 4 Cease and desist *caretaking of the privileged*.
- 5 Maintain investment in the *conversation*.