



A-B-C on racialised youth

(VERSION A and B)





MAIN GOAL

Introduce the participants to the topic of invisible racism and specific concepts in order to be able to identify and counterfeit acts of microaggressions.

OBJECTIVES OF THE SESSIONS

- Introduce participants to the concept of racism and the meaning of power relations
- Encourage participants to experience an activity where different power relations are observed and reflect upon it
- Explore we more depth in exploring invisible racism and specifically microaggressions
- Participants will take on a role that is exposed to racism and the aim is to reflect on different perspectives and levels of privilege, prejudices and racism

DURATION FORESEEN

3 hours and 20 minutes

NEEDS (FOR THE SPACE)

- Chairs in circle
- Tables for the groups to be able to work around it
- Sound system
- Place to display two flipcharts

FOR WHOM

- Diverse members of the organisation (staff, volunteers, people working directly with young people)





STEP BY STEP DESCRIPTION

- 10' INTRODUCTION

Trainers welcome the participants to the session and do a round of presentations: everyone says their name and their role in the organisation and one thing about themselves that starts with the first letter of their name. After this, trainers introduce the agenda and objectives of the session.

- 30' RACISM AND POWER

Expected outcome: The objective of this content session is to introduce participants to the concept of racism and the meaning of power relations.

Introducing stereotypes and prejudices

Trainers start with presenting the Allport's Scale of Prejudice (Constellations, p. 16) using a flipchart or digital materials and connect how stereotypes and prejudices can lead to various acts of racism and discrimination on different levels and how power relations influence this.

In the 1970s the US academic circles studying racial relations and racism suggested a very simple formula to explain racism: Racism= Prejudice + Power. This equation has been contested since then by some, but what this idea rightfully does is to put power in the conversation about racism.

Next, trainers introduce the 3 types of power:

- political power
- institutional power
- cultural power

With a reflection exercise, trainers introduce the concept of Power and Privilege:





Exercise:

Now let us imagine that skin colour, ethnic background, gender, gender identity or sexual orientation can also work as passports – they would allow you to do certain things more easily than others. Let us take a couple of examples:

- Because of my skin colour, I am not afraid I will be verbally or physically harassed walking down the street;
- Because of my skin colour or ethnic background I do not expect to face difficulties when trying to rent a flat;
- Because of my skin colour or ethnic background I am not afraid that the things I say will be taken to represent the position of the whole group;
- Because of my skin colour or ethnic background I am confident I will get serviced in a bar, restaurant or shop;
- Because of my skin colour or ethnic background I don't do not
- think that I create a bad name for a group if I have bad results at a test – these results concern only me;
- Because of my skin colour or ethnic background I don't do not pre-sume a police officer or a judge would have a strong bias against me;
- I do not fear that I will have difficulties making friends at school because of my skin colour or ethnic background;
- Because of my gender I am not afraid employers will not hire me because of the possibility to soon have children;
- Because of my gender I am not afraid that I will be considered too emotional or too mean at my workplace;
- Because of my gender I do not fear being harassed or raped walk-ing down the streets;
- Because of my sexual orientation I am not afraid of holding my partner's hand in public;
- Because of my sexual orientation, I am not trying to use gender-neutral words and pronouns for my partners so as not to disclose their gender;
- When I watch the media I can see my group well represented in the news and stories;





These are just some examples of white privilege, male privilege and straight privilege. They are a few from hundreds if not thousands of everyday situations which people, belonging to the majority, do not consider at all, because they represent problems they do not actually face. Their “passport” is more powerful than the one of people from minority groups as it allows them to navigate through the borders of everyday life more easily, which they often do not even know exist.

- 45' POWER RELATIONS

In this activity participants explore thoughts and feelings related to being powerful and powerless through putting themselves in a position of a cat and a mouse. (Constellations manual)

1. Inform participants that you are going to tell them a story, and they just need to follow your voice and imagine the things you are saying or asking. Read the text for visualisation
2. Take a poster, divide it into two parts with a line and draw a cat on one side and a mouse on the other. Ask participants about all the thoughts, feelings and actions of the cat and mouse. Write them down in the respective part of the poster.

Story:

Breathe. Try to relax your body. Close your eyes. Make yourself feel

comfortable. I imagine I leave my classroom, and go out of my school. There is a small road that I have never taken before. I decided to take it now. The small road goes to an old, abandoned house. I am at the door, I open it and I get inside the house. What I find is a very large, dark room. I get to walk around the room and my body starts to shake. I get smaller. I'm already the size of a notebook and I'm still getting smaller. I grow hair all over my body, my teeth grow, and I





realise that I have become a little mouse. How do I feel in the position of a mouse? How do I see the world from this position?

Suddenly, the door of the house opens and a big cat appears and begins to walk around the house. How do I feel? What do I think? The cat suddenly looks at me and starts walking in my direction. It is coming closer and closer. What can I do? How do I feel?

Just when the cat is almost by my side, my body is transforming again, I become a cat, and the cat becomes a mouse. How do I feel right now? How do I see the world now when I am a cat? How do I see the mouse? I decide what I will do with the mouse. Then I go ahead and do it. My body shakes again and begins to regain its form and size. After I have regained my shape and size, I leave the house and I go back to school. I climb the stairs to my class and I sit down...

And gradually we open our eyes.

Debrief activity and questions:

- How did you feel as a mouse?
- How did you feel as a cat?
- What did you think when you were the mouse? What did you do?
- In which situation did you feel weak? In which situation did you feel powerful?
- Where would you prefer to live, in a world where cats eat mice? Or where they can live together?
- Who are cats and mice in your local community? Who in society is in the position of power? And who is in the position of submission?
- Why do we like power?
- What are the reasons for the people in submissive positions to be there? And why are those in power positions over there?
- How is power related to racism?
- How can we create a space where power relations don't exist





For the debrief activity, trainers should pay attention to the response of the participants to the reflection and be mindful if it can be sensitive for some of them. Moderate the debriefing in a way that you make sure if a process or discussion is opened, you can close the process.

- 10' BREAK

- 30' INVISIBLE RACISM AND MICROAGGRESSIONS

This session focuses on specific content on microaggressions, for this, trainers should investigate and prepare materials accordingly.

We ask ourselves the question "How do power relations, racism and microaggressions connect and influence the lives of individuals"

When we talk about invisible racism, we refer to the harmful behaviours which are considered normal and accepted by society. The line that draws between what we all know by racism and what invisible racism is, is a line of tolerance. Some examples of what invisible racism could be are people telling racist jokes, or avoiding contact with a person coming from a different ethnic group by simply going to the other side of the street, or deciding not to date a person who is not white. These behaviours, although not considered harmful by many, lead to exclusion, anxiety, and influence people's wellbeing.

Following this, trainers go into the following specifics:

- What are microaggressions?
- Different types of microaggressions: Microassault, microinsults, microinvalidation,
- Characteristics of microaggressions

For this, it's recommended that trainers investigate various manuals that will help you as a trainer to facilitate this learning part. As a suggestion, the





concepts and definitions are easier to understand with preparing flipcharts and key words in speech bubbles or cards.

- 30' TAKE A STEP

Participants will take on a role that is exposed to racism and the aim is to reflect on different perspectives and levels of privilege, prejudices and racism.

Participants explore racist microaggressions through the story of a Somali refugee Ahmed. They need to identify microaggressions throughout the story and express this by taking steps. (Constellations manual)

1. Prepare enough empty space and ask participants to form a long line, standing next to each other shoulder to shoulder.

2. Explain to the participants that you are going to read a story, which is broken down into 17 parts. After each part, they will need to decide if the described situation in the current part represents a form of racism. If they think so, they need to take a step forward. If not, stay in the same place.

3. Ask the participants to close their eyes, so they do not get influenced by the movement of the others. Start reading the story of Ahmed. Repeat each part at least once and give time for participants to decide whether or not to move forward. Make sure they understand when each part of the story is over and a new one begins. Considering the participants are moving with their eyes closed, observe safety.

4. After the end of the story, invite participants to open their eyes, look around the space and note where they are situated in comparison with the others. You can take a couple of first-hand comments. Then invite participants to sit down in a circle for debriefing.

The Story of Ahmed

1. It is the beginning of the school year, and there is a new face in the classroom. The teacher introduces Ahmed, who just says 'hi' to the class and sits alone on one of the empty desks. The class welcomes him to the group.





2. During the first break you and a few of your friends approach Ahmed to get to know him. One of your friends asks loudly “Do you speak our language?”, making a lot of gestures with his hands.
3. Ahmed responds with no trace of any accent that he speaks and understands everything perfectly. You start chatting. A friend of yours asks where Ahmed is from and he answers that he is “from here”, as he moved from a nearby city. The answer does not satisfy the curiosity of your group, and someone else asks “But where are you really from?”.
4. Ahmed feels a bit uncomfortable with the question, since he has been living in the country since he was two years old. However, he explains that he is black, which might not fit into the general standard of the society, but he feels local, since he does not know any other reality. Someone from your group responds that he should not worry, “here we are not racists, and there is only one race – the human race!”.
5. Later in the school year, in one of your classes you discuss entrepreneurship and preparing to shine in the labour market. Your teacher asks the class what are the most important factors in order to succeed and get a job. Ana answers that in her opinion the most important thing is to work hard and that everyone can succeed, if they work hard enough.
6. Everyone agrees with the statement, and Emy adds a joke that what will help Ahmed to succeed is originality, because of the way he looks. The whole class laughs, Ahmed included
7. During the break, Emy approaches Ahmed and acknowledges that they had a lot of fun during the class. She touches his hair and says that she is so fascinated by it. “So exotic”, she says.
8. As time passes, Ahmed gets a nickname in the class: Somi, short from Somali. Your classmates sometimes joke that Somi is quite intelligent for a black person.
9. One day, during math class, the teacher gives the tests back, and says out loud that Ahmed got the highest score. Dan, who is sitting next to him,





taps him friendly on the shoulder and says “Congratulations, bro, you are a credit to your race!”.

10. You are with your mom in front of a shop, waiting for your dad. Ahmed sees you and approaches you to say “hi”. At this moment, your mom interrupts him by saying “We do not have money”, assuming that he is approaching to beg.
11. The next day you feel bad about the situation with your mom, and you approach Ahmed to tell him you are sorry. A classmate overhears the conversation and says “But your mom can not be racist. She works with some black people in the factory”.
12. In one of your classes you are given a task to create posters of people who serve as your inspiration. You believe that this can inspire others in the whole school. You did a great job, but somehow no one in the class included anybody who is not white or belongs to another minority.
13. Valentine’s day is approaching and there is a practice in your school to send Valentine messages to others. Your classmate Jane comments: “Let us see who will be the ‘lucky one’ to get the Valentine from Somi. I hope it will not be me, I am not into black guys.”
14. One day Tino realises that his phone is missing. He is sure that it must have happened in school, probably even in class. Someone approaches Somi and tells him “If you give the phone back, we will not inform the teacher about it.”
15. Ahmed says that it was not him, but no one believes him. As the days go by, classmates interact less and less with him.
16. Ahmed realises that he is the only one in the class who is not invited to a party. He feels very bad already about the whole situation.
17. One day when Ahmed comes to school he finds a note on his desk that says “Go back to Africa”.

Debrief questions:

- How do you feel?





- How do you feel about the fact that different people positioned themselves differently throughout the story? Why do you think that happened?
- What were the most difficult situations in which you had to make a decision and why?
- Let us look for microaggressions in this story: are you able to identify at least 5 of them?
- What were the microaggressions that made you feel very uncomfortable and why?
- How would you define a racial microaggression?
- Which of the microaggressions are based on stereotypes? What are these stereotypes?
- What are the elements which contributed to the full exclusion of Ahmed at the end of the story?
- Are different microaggressions influencing Ahmed only individually or also as a combination? How do you think this changes the impact on Ahmed?
- When is the right moment to react when we identify a microaggression? How can we react?
- Have you experienced similar situations in real life? What were they? Did you react and how?
- Why is it sometimes more difficult to react to racist acts and words done and said by people in our close circle? What are the best strategies to react?

Tips for trainers: This activity encourages participants to see and understand different perspectives. Pay attention to the group of participants you have in the session and be prepared to moderate sensitive discussion, making sure everyone feels heard and included.





- 10' CLOSING AND EVALUATION

For the closure of the session, participants sit in a circle and trainers start with a summary of the activities done in the session. After this, every participant is encouraged to share one key learning they take from this session and one reflection point for the future.

MATERIALS NEEDED

- [Constellations manual](#)
- Print out the images from p. 78 to p.82 (10 images per group)
- Flipcharts
- Markers
- Pens
- Sticky notes of at least two different colours

TIPS FOR TRAINERS

- Promote the creation of safer space by establishing ground rules for respectful dialogue, emphasising empathy and listening.
- Be ready to handle and - if needed - stop possible discussions between participants.

