



The Identity Game: How We Group and Label Ourselves

The Identity Game is an audience-participation exercise where session attendees stand by signs that represent various identities that are personal to the attendee. There are 16 signs/identities altogether; to get audience members to select a sign to stand by, I read various prompts.

(Trigger Warning: This exercise is entirely voluntary; audience members do not have to participate and can simply observe or leave the room. Although the prompts are not overly invasive, it's possible that a prompt, in combination with one or more of the identities, may trigger an emotional reaction.)

What is the value of this exercise?

Humans are hard-wired to group and label others. But we also group and label *ourselves*. When we do that, we often forget that we're not alone in struggling to survive the Human Condition.

When we forget or ignore our commonality with everyone else who's also struggling to survive the Human Condition, it becomes easier to judge and marginalize people, particularly those whom society considers "other."

The Identity Game helps us to remember that we are not alone in our everyday and larger world struggles. It seeks to remind about our commonalities and how it's necessary to have compassion for one's self as a prerequisite to having empathy and compassion for others.

Finally, if we're really going to change America's landscape relative to diversity and inclusivity (particularly the latter), we need to get out of our comfort zones. Too often, training around diversity and inclusion has allowed the listener to remain comfortable; as a result, things don't change because people are not inspired to change the way they think.

The Identity Game is intended to provide some of that needed inspiration.

Thank you. Please have compassion for yourself and for others!

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Encouraging Open Hearts and Thriving Human Spirits

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