

Identity Time

👤 Small Group

📍 101

🔒 High Trust

🕒 15 mins

🏳️‍🌈 LGBTQ

An activity that provokes reflection on the different aspects of your life that would be altered if you identified with a different sexuality or gender identity.

🚩 Goals & objectives

- To have participants reflect on how their daily lives, future goals, and relationships would change due to a particular (or number of) stigmatized identities
- To have participants reflect on the number of different topics covered throughout the workshop and apply those lessons learned to their own lives

📋 Step-by-step walk through

1. Explain the activity to participants. *Example:* “We are now going to move to an activity called Identity time. This is an activity that is first going to ask you to profile a couple of different elements of your life. Then you will roll the dice and see what combination of identities you are given. Then you will be asked to reassess your current situation according to those new identities. I am going to pass out a sheet, go ahead and take 5 minutes to write down some thoughts, and look up to me when you’re done.”
2. Pass out the “Identity Time” participant sheet and writing utensils. Ask people to fill out the sheet without talking to each other.
3. Ask that people get into groups of 3 (or have them count off) and then hand out the dice (or envelopes).
4. Ask each person to take turns choosing identities or rolling the dice. Once they have their new identities they should share with their small group what they had written down and how that would change with their new set of identities.
5. After each person is done ask the group to come back together and debrief.

💬 Follow-up questions

Did anyone think that their identity sheet would change dramatically with their new identities? Would anyone like to share?

Did anyone not think their identity sheet would change much? And would you like to share that experience?

Did anything surprise you during this activity?

Anyone have any reflections or final thoughts on the activity?



EXAMPLE OF ACTIVITY

John is a straight identified masculine presenting male.

Closest to his younger brother Todd who has always looked up to him.

His closest friends are Wane and Sarah, Sarah he has known since middle school and Wayne from freshman year running track. John wants to grow up and be a pediatrician. He's always liked working with kids and is pre-med at college. John has always wanted kids and a long-term partner.

Thinking about wanting to settle down in his hometown Brunswick, Maine.

John is given the identity 'Gay' and chooses not to change any other aspect of his identity.

How would this change his list?

His brother doesn't know other gay people. John says he would be hesitant to tell him for fear he'll change how he thinks of him. He has heard him say some homophobic phrases like 'that's so gay' or 'no homo' so he's not sure how cool he would be with it.

John thinks that Sarah would be totally fine if he was gay. He knows that she wouldn't treat him any differently – she has a lot of gay friends at college. He doesn't know about Wane. Wane is very cool guy and doesn't seem homophobic but John says he'd be worried about others on the team finding out.

John doesn't know if he would have to change his plans if he was gay. Depends if he decided to make that known to the public and if patients and parents knew he was gay. John says, "I know some people aren't cool with gay men around their kids – so could be an issue as pediatrician." John says he thinks he would still want kids but has no idea how hard it is to legally adopt kids as a gay parent. So not sure how that would turn out.

John says if he was gay he probably wouldn't return to Brunswick. He said growing up he didn't know of any other gay people and there really isn't any community he can think of there. So would probably have to move to a city or something.

Wrap-up

This activity brings together a lot of different themes that we've talked about throughout the workshop, and while we often focus on how these issues and experiences affect other people, it is important to reflect how it can affect or limit our own lives, even when we don't identify a particular way at the moment. For many people the knowledge that a certain action or expression would shift how others would perceive, treat, and relate to them, affects their ability to identify, take action, or of express themselves a particular way. In this way stigma and marginalized identities affect us all.



Make it your own

You can have people do this as a large group or in smaller groups depending on the size of the larger group and the comfort level of the participants. The smaller the group and the higher their comfort level - the more likely that sharing as a big group from the get-go is a good idea.

You can do this with or without props. If you don't have Identity Envelopes pre-made or dice then you can make up scrap paper identities on the spot and simply hand them out to people.

You can ask people what part of your identity (in terms of your sex, gender identity, or sexuality) would change your life/experiences/relationship most dramatically? And how would it change them?

You have the option of letting THEM pick the identity that would change their experiences most dramatically, and then proceed to report out in terms of the smaller group and/or the larger group.

You can have this without any larger group report out - and just have people share within the smaller groups.

You can add your two cents. Be the first person to volunteer to put themselves out there, share your identity time sheet, roll the dice/pick identities/ or choose an identity that would dramatically shift your experiences and model what you are looking for from people. This is a particularly powerful when the group is shy, quiet, or unenthusiastic about sharing.

Notes

This activity can be a good closing activity or second to closing activity. It does ask that participants share quite personal information with each other in some capacity and as such it is not recommended that you do this with groups that do not trust each other and do not have a rapport built with each other.

This activity can be quite heavy. It is a good idea to debrief the activity and let people know how this activity can be seen in a positive light.

If you do conduct this activity with the whole group - make sure that everyone will have their turn to share - this makes everyone who is sharing more willing to speak knowing that everyone else will as well.



Identity Time

1) Who is the family member you closest to?

2) Who is your closest friend?

3) What are some of your career goals for the future? Jobs you'd like to have or fields you'd like to be in.

4) Where do you see yourself living (or remaining to live) in 5 years?

5) What are some of your lifestyle goals for the future? Family, kids, significant other, etc.

