

5.1 Color blindness

Step 5. Reflect

Time: 45 min

Individual exercise

Summary

"I don't see skin color, only people". Sayings like the quote usually comes from good a place and that the fact that we have an ideal of being inclusive and fair. Even so, that type of attitude, which can be called "color blindness", leads to major problems with progressing in the work towards better equality, diversity, and inclusion. In this individual reflection exercise, we will work with this important theme - to move from color blindness to color awareness.

Conversation guidelines

- Assume that "everyone" is in the room ("those of us who...").
- Remember that we have different prior knowledge and experience of the themes raised, so show respect.
- Think freely and interpret each other kindly.

What to do:

- Read the text "From color blindness to color awareness".
- See educational film 1 about color blindness, language and the consequences of discrimination based on skin color produced by the Stockholm County Administrative Board's project "Vidga Normen". Remember to pause the clip during the exercise and the questions that are asked for the opportunity to reflect.
- Watch educational film 2 which shows a recruitment scenario and then discuss the questions at the end of the exercise. If there is an opportunity and there are several of you in the team doing the exercise at the same time, you can choose to carry out a joint discussion about these.

Exercise

From color blindness to color awareness

"Color blindness" or "postraciality" is a concept researched by, among others, David Theo Goldberg. In his book "Are We All Postracial Yet?" he explores what makes racism as a phenomenon continue to exist. His main argument, as the title suggests, is precisely "postraciality" or the belief that in today's society we live in a color-blind time

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where skin color no longer matters. What he means is that we tend to confuse our ideal image with actually self-regulating the society we have, which makes it difficult for people who are exposed to racism in today's society to express it. Colorblindness is the belief that skin color is invisible and therefore risks leading to a lack of recognition of the structural forms of vulnerability that people face. He believes that color blindness becomes a method to avoid discussions about social injustices in the present day.

As we mentioned in the summary for the exercise, mindsets such as "I don't see skin color" or "I see beyond skin color" lead to obstacles for equality work, even though it usually comes with good intentions. The fact is that people are treated differently, given different conditions and risk being exposed to hatred and violence on a daily basis precisely because of skin color - and this is made invisible if we don't talk about skin color and racialization. The fact is that it is an inherent contradiction in the work for equality that in order to reach the goal that group affiliation and identities should NOT matter, we must dare to see and talk about groups and identities as a means to reach said goal. With regards to skin color and racialization there are particular challenges in Sweden about how we should talk about, and address, racial inequality and racist structures. This is largely due to Sweden's history of race biology research and the Swedish self-image of being a moral superpower. Against this background, the County Administrative Board in Stockholm's project "Vidga Normen" has broken new ground as it has specifically focused on discrimination based on skin color. In this exercise, we will, among other things, take part in some of their important material to go from color blindness to color awareness.

[Educational video 1](#) (In Swedish)

Consider pausing the film during reflection questions and exercises to give yourselves time to think.

[Educational video 2](#) (In English)

Reflection questions:

- What situations did you see in the clip where prejudices and stereotypes linked to skin color and ethnicity play a role?
- In what ways do you see skin color affecting people's everyday lives in society at large? In working life? At your workplace?
- It is common to talk about skin color in the singular. An example is that the color of patches that are often referred to as "skin-colored" when they are light beige. What does it mean that it is so? What do you think we can do instead?

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- Skin color also has a strong connection to the perception of "Swedishness". What does the question: "Are you completely Swedish?" mean? In what ways is Swedishness associated with a question of skin colour?
- Finally, sum up what reasons you see for moving from "color blindness" to "color awareness" after doing the exercise?

Material tips

[Crime Prevention Council's report on Afrophobic hate crimes in Sweden \(2022\)](#)

[Children's Ombudsman on the vulnerability of children and young people to racism \(2021\)](#)

[The Friends report 2021 on racist bullying](#)