

Social Location Exercise



FROM *the* HEARTH 

Social Location and Yoga

The pre-practice of Yoga starts with creating an environment that is safe to practice living life in.

Creating this safe environment is described in the first limb of Yoga, the Yama-s.

Patañjali - the compiler of the Yoga Sūtras - shares that when one practices interrupting harm (through direct action, civil disobedience, activism, etc.) (āhimsa), what results are the facts of the world (satya) that leave people's property intact (asteya), and their personal boundaries intact (brahmacarya), all while the practitioner does not hoard or enrich themselves in this pre-practice process (aparigrahā). ([Source](#))

To be able to interrupt systems of harm (aka, to be able to pre-practice Yoga), you will first need to bring your awareness to the system in question, and then determine your relationship to it. This will assist you in understanding your unique role in its interruption.

This is what the Social Location Exercise will help you to do when planning to interrupt the system of white supremacy.

Seek Sanctuary by FROM^{the} HEARTH

Social Location Exercise

This exercise is a synthesis of the work of the following organizations/educators, and is shared with permission:

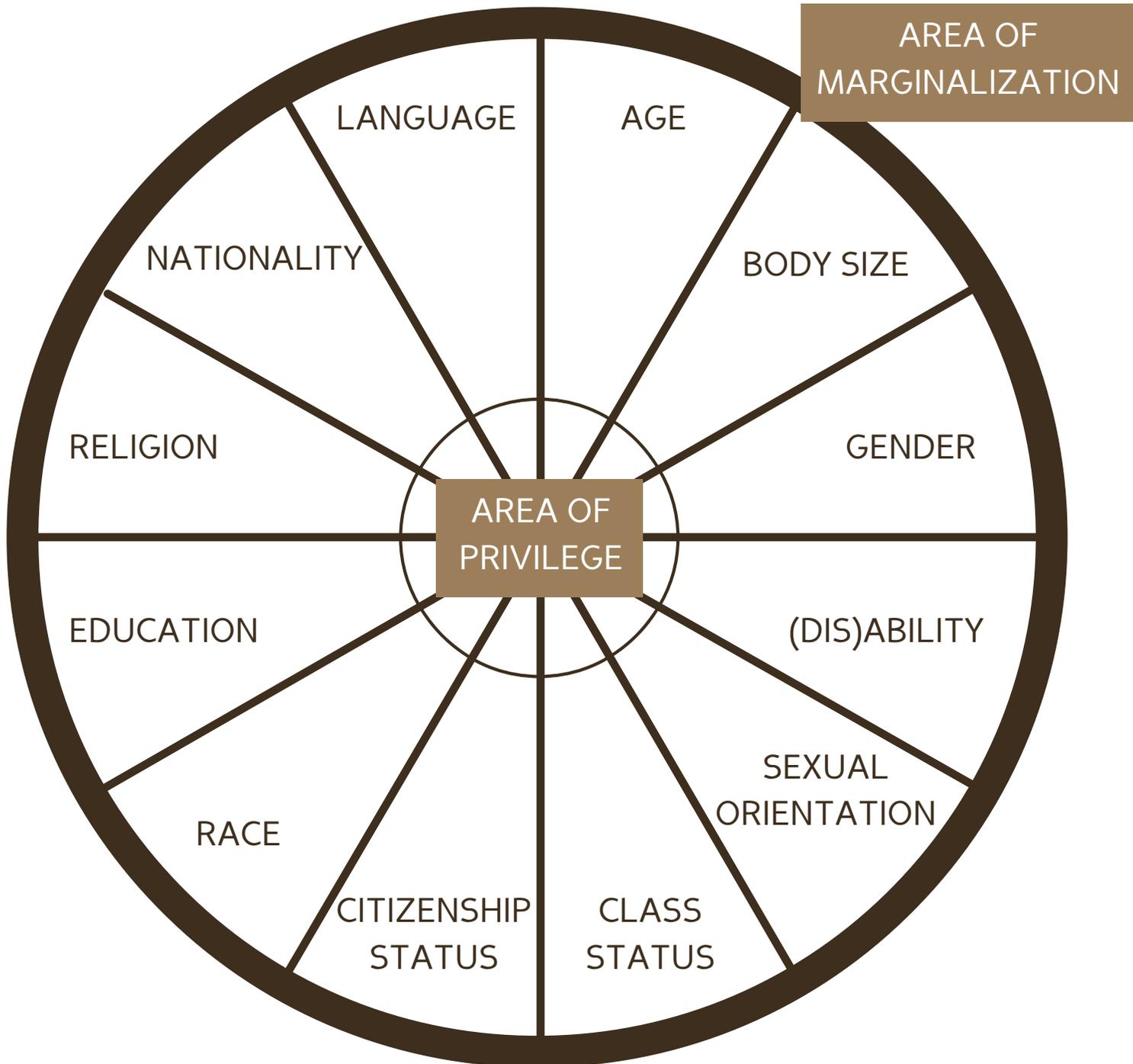
1. Dismantling Racism Works
2. Move to End Violence
3. Michelle Cassandra Johnson
4. Vivette Jeffries-Logan
5. Kerri Kelly

Please consider following them on social media, signing up to their newsletters, and engaging in their work. It is important to maintain an up-to-date understanding of your privilege as it is dynamic; new terminology and considerations are being introduced all the time.

It is also important to stay tuned into your Self-Intimacy practices as you yourself are also dynamic. As you grow and change, your identities may shift. It is important to re-orient yourself over time.

This PDF is an excerpt from the Seek Sanctuary program, by From The Hearth.

A Wheel of Privilege



Social Location Exercise

This exercise highlights the work of Kimberlé Crenshaw, who coined the term "intersectionality." It will paint a larger picture of the various intersections of your identities, showing where white supremacy might grant you privilege, and where you might be marginalized.

Included on this wheel are twelve identity categories that you can use to start mapping your identities. Of course, you are much more complex than these twelve categories! This serves as a starting point for further investigation.

The table on the next page highlights suggestions about identities that might be proximal to and marginalized from privilege. Note that while binaries oversimplify things, they can also assist you in locating yourself.

Each spoke on this wheel is a spectrum. Discernment and nuance is required. As you complete the exercise, you could consider whether the binaries as presented on the next page are accurate in your view. If you have suggestions for updates, please feel free to share them by emailing connect@from-thehearth.ca!

Identity Categories

IDENTITY	PROXIMAL TO PRIVILEGE	MARGINAL FROM PRIVILEGE
AGE	25-45	0-25, 45+
BODY SIZE	Assigned Female At Birth? - Small Assigned Male at Birth? - Larger	Assigned Female At Birth? - Large Assigned Male at Birth? - Small
GENDER	Male Cis	Female Trans
(DIS)ABILITY	Able-Bodied Neurotypical	Disabled Neurodivergent
SEXUALITY	Heterosexual	Asexual Homosexual
CLASS STATUS	Top 15%	Poverty
CITIZENSHIP	Citizen	Refugee Immigrant
RACE	White	Black Indigenous
EDUCATION	Has a Degree Literate	Doesn't have a Diploma Illiterate
RELIGION	Christianity	Muslim Sikh
NATIONALITY	First World Country	Third World Country
LANGUAGE	English A Language Using Roman Alphabet	Other

Social Location Exercise

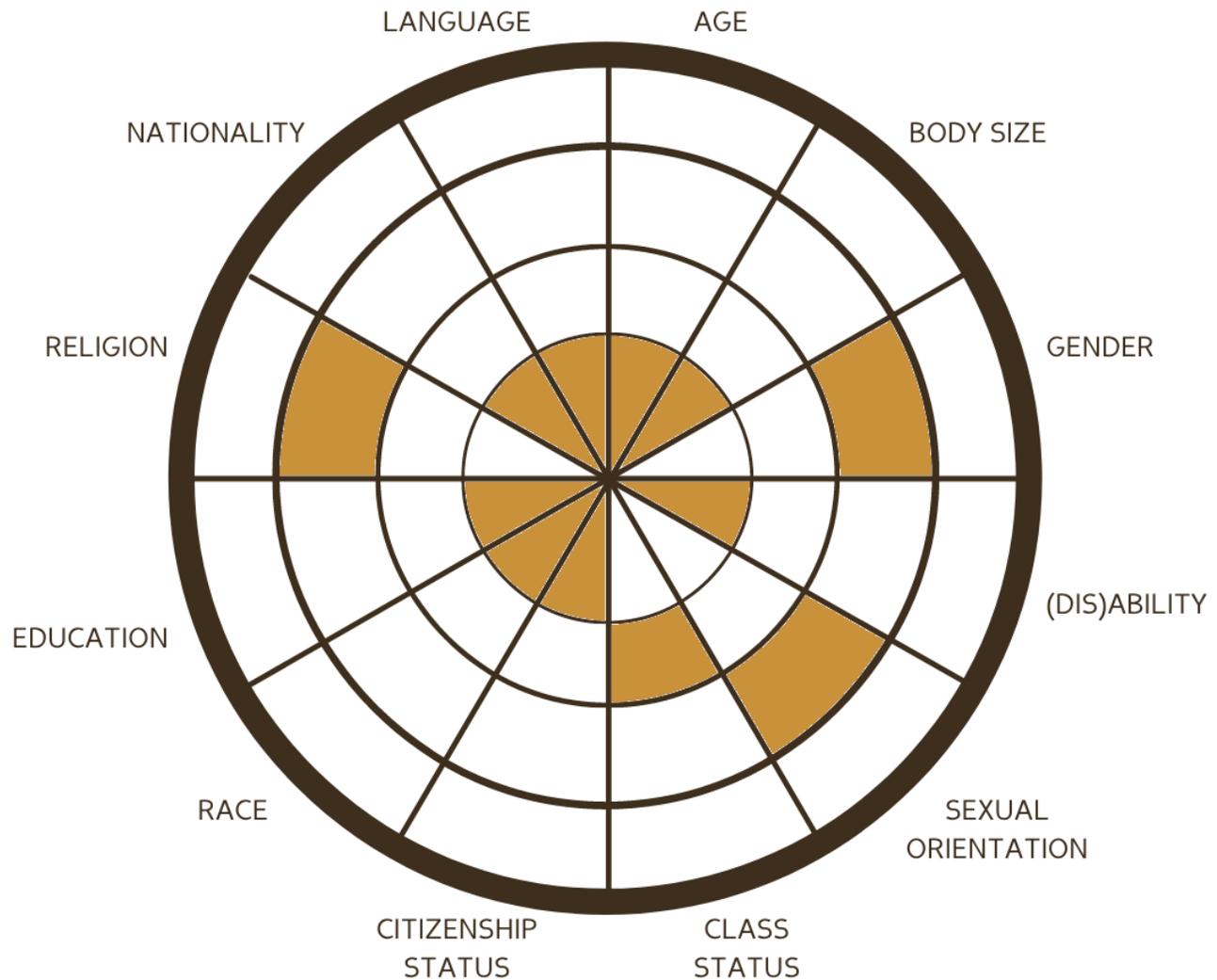
Social Location - one's position in society based on their social group memberships.

This is not one's position in society based on life experience, suffering, or personal trauma. Please know that while these experiences are valid, this exercise is not about them.

Here you are examining how your identities are treated (valued or not valued) by a culture informed by white supremacy. You are encouraged to be critical throughout your self-inquiry, and also compassionate in how you hold yourself as you go through this process.

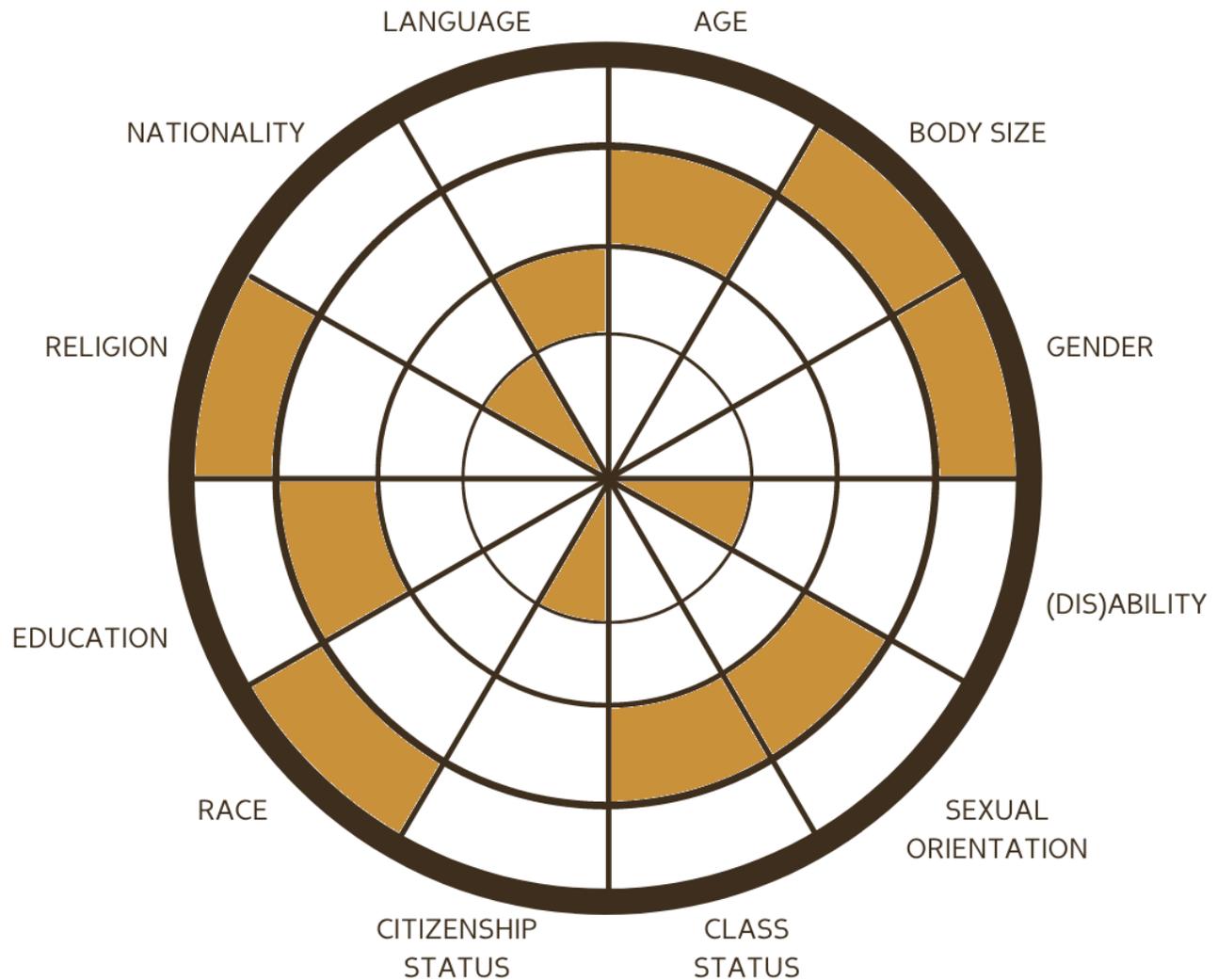
Consider where you fall within each spectrum. Mark up your wheel based on each of your identity's proximity to privilege; the center of the circle is most privileged, the diameter of the circle is most marginalized.

Social Location Example



A 29 year old, slender, white, genderqueer, pansexual person with no disabilities, who grew up in a middle class family with citizenship in a First World country, has a Degree, who does not practice Christianity and who speaks and writes fluent English.

Social Location Example

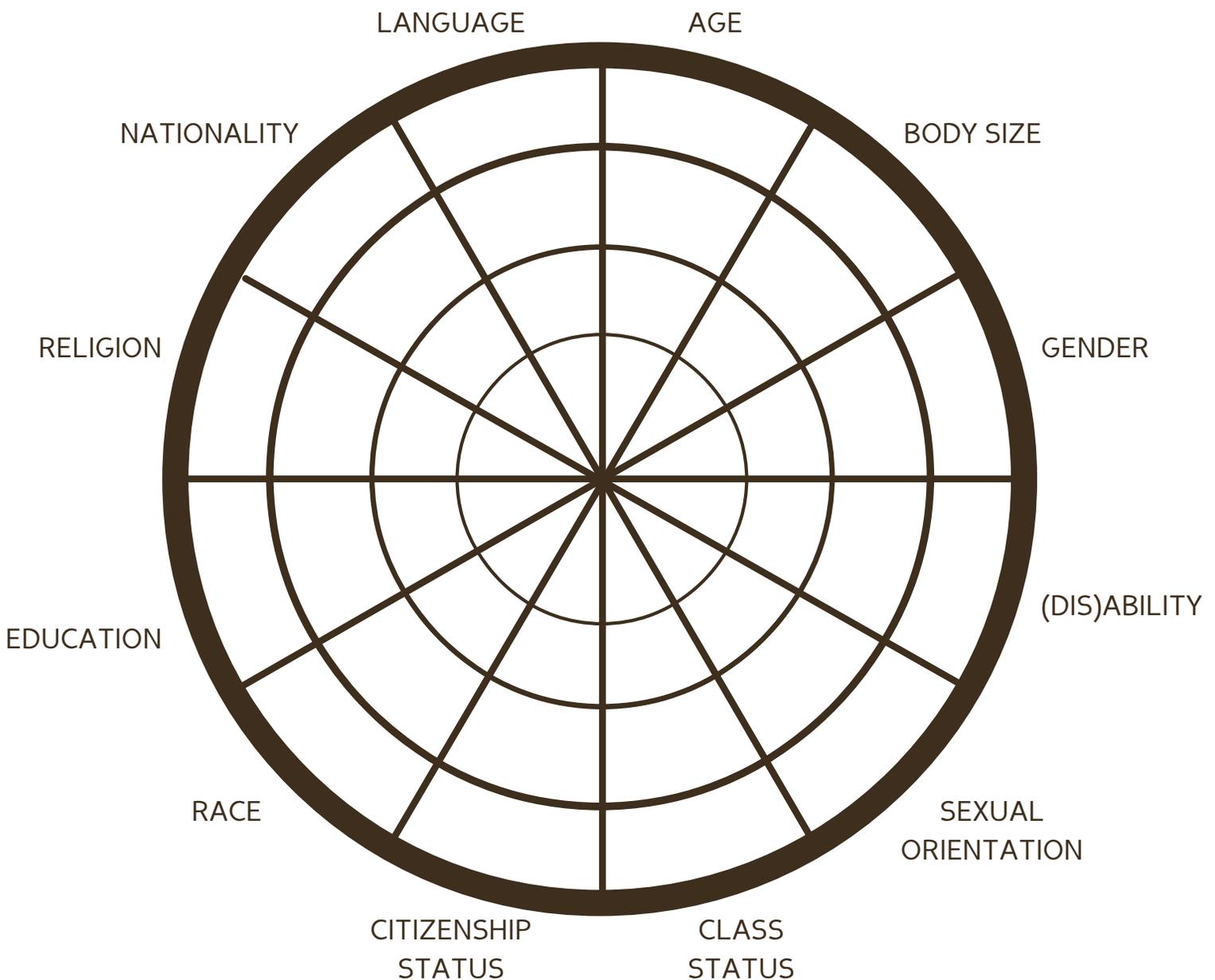


A 45 year old, heavy set, queer Black transgender woman with no disabilities, who grew up in poverty with citizenship in a First World country, does not have a Diploma, who has been rejected from mainstream Christianity and who speaks and writes English semi-fluently.

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Your Social Location

Here you can shade in where you fit on each of these identity spectrums at this time.



Managing Discomfort

The following three pages are written primarily for folks who may not have been aware of social location and their proximity to privilege before this exercise

Discomfort does not necessarily equal pain.

It can be extremely uncomfortable to realize how much of an advantage you may have been given in your lifetime just by virtue of the identities that you hold and the culture - informed by white supremacy - that you were born into. This is not a personal attack. This does not mean that you have never faced hardship. It means that the system has erected relatively fewer barriers for you as opposed to others who hold an intersection of more marginalized identities.

The invitation for you is to sit with this discomfort, and to start tuning into and seeing this system in your everyday life. For example, when you see advertisements, how many marginalized identities do you see? When you fill out government paperwork, how much space and consideration is provided to affirm folks whose identities are on the margins?

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Continuing the Practice

Completing this Social Location Exercise is a step that comes before the pre-practice of Yoga. To interrupt harm, you first need to have a basic understanding of the harm and your relationship to it.

Specifically regarding white supremacy, it is essential that one understands their intersectionality so that they can start to see

1. How they benefit from the system,
2. How their actions serve to uphold the system, and
3. What impactful actions they could take to interrupt the system.

One place to start the pre-practice of Yoga (aka to start interrupting systems of harm such as white supremacy) could be to research, listen to, and learn from the folks who hold the most marginalized identities where you hold the most privilege. For example, if you are white, start learning from Black and Indigenous folks. If you are able bodied, start learning from people with disabilities. If you are cisgender, start learning from trans people. And PAY these people for their work; this returns privilege to those who have been marginalized in a tangible way.

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Continuing the Practice

You may feel sensations in your body associated with this returning of privilege; it could manifest as discomfort, sadness, indignation, anger, etc.

This is part of the practice! You are invited to embrace it, and to practice extra Self-Intimacy at these times.

Remember, this privilege was given to you by a harmful system designed to keep everyone unwell. Every time you practice privilege redistribution, you are interrupting that harmful system.

You make a difference! Your practice makes a difference!

To connect to a variety of educators over a broad range of topics, you can check out this Unlearning Resource Library.

For more support in Self-Intimacy and other yoga practices, you can check out From The Hearth.



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