

**Deepening a Practice of Cultural Humility**  
**Self- Reflection Questions for Working with Older Adults & Their Families**  
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Deepening a practice of humility is a lifelong process and requires ongoing practice. This is a tool to help you engage in a practice of self-reflection so that you are better able to evaluate your own privilege, power, bias, and gaps in knowledge about other cultures.

As you pursue deepening a practice of multicultural humility, consider these five steps (Tervalon & Murray-Garcia, 1998):

1. Make a **lifelong commitment** to engaging in multicultural humility.
2. **Self-evaluate** your own privilege, power, biases, and gaps in knowledge about other cultures.
3. **Be open** to new and differing ideas, information, and advice
4. Address **power imbalances** in relationships (e.g., the older adult-provider relationship)
5. **Advocate** in partnership with and on behalf of historically disenfranchised populations

As you engage in these reflection questions, it can be helpful to remember that:

- Learning about ourselves and our identities is SCARY!
- Recognizing our own biases/assumptions is UNCOMFORTABLE- challenge yourself to sit with the discomfort.
- This framework does NOT ASSUME that holding membership in or awareness regarding one minority culture automatically leads to awareness of other minority groups.
- The salience of each cultural factor is DETERMINED BY THE INDIVIDUAL (not the framework)
- This framework is NOT A SUBSTITUTE for culture-specific knowledge and skills (so, your work does not stop here!)

The ADDRESSING (Hays, 2001) framework is a tool to assist in organizing our understanding of various cultural groups in the United States and constructs of power and privilege.

Cultural Variable	Power	Less power	Understand & Protect Against...
Age	Adults	Most typically Older Adults	Ageism
Disability (Developmental & Acquired)	Non-Disabled	Persons with disabilities	Ableism
Religion	Christians	Jews, Muslims, other non-Christian	Anti-Semitism/Religious Oppression
Ethnicity & Race	Euro-American	People of Color	Racism
Socioeconomic Status (Social Class)	Owning & Middle Class (access to higher ed.)	Poor & Working Class	Classism
Sexual Orientation	Heterosexual	Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual	Heterosexism
Indigenous Background	Non-native	Native	Racism
National Origin	U.S. Born	Immigrants & Refugees	Racism/Colonialism
Gender & Gender Identity	Cis-Gender Male	Female, Transgender, Intersex	Sexism & Transphobia

Hays, P. A. (2001). *Addressing Cultural Complexities in Practice: A Framework for Clinicians and Counselors*. Washington, D. C: American Psychological Association.

Consider the following reflection questions related to each of the identity factors listed in the ADDRESSING framework. These questions were created by Dr. Regina Koepp to assist in the process of evaluating our own privilege, power, bias, and gaps in knowledge about other cultures.

\*\* When considering your level of power, the model is not asking how powerful you “feel”, rather it is asking you to consider your level of power in a greater socio-cultural-political context. \*\*\*

\*\*\* Countering oppressive thoughts or actions can be subtle including corrective self-talk, moving toward people to receive support, moving toward an anti-oppressive group, etc. Or overt, including confrontation or advocacy.

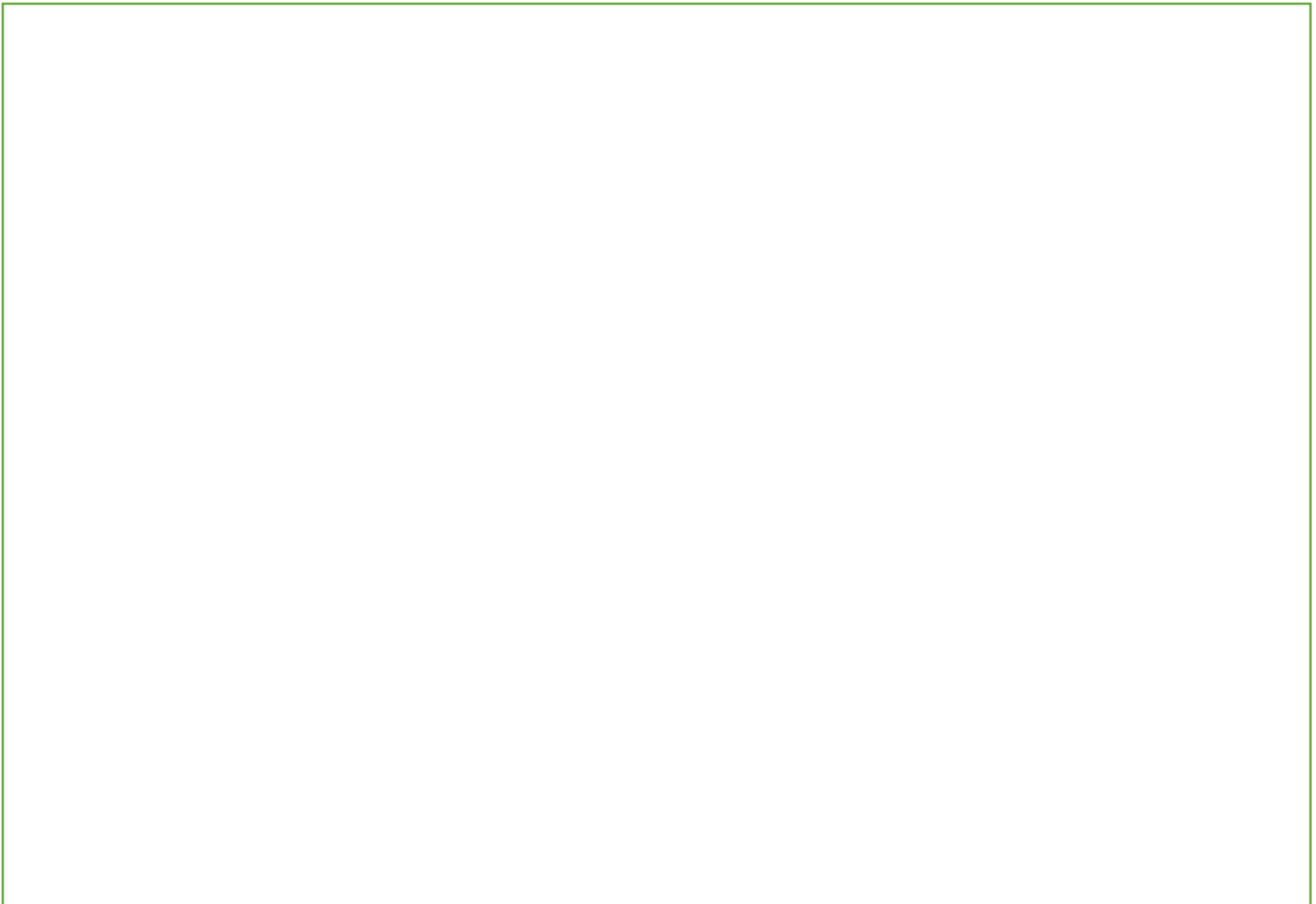
**Age:**

- Identify your age
- Consider the year you were born and your generational influences.
- What are the implications of your age as it relates to power and privilege?
- What is your level of power\*\* in this domain? (If you are over 65, you have less power.)
- Consider how age factors into your personal relationships and relationships with your clients.
- If you are in the power category, reflect on ways that you may have unconsciously engaged in ageist thoughts or actions (e.g., “my client is so cute... they’re surprisingly sharp... they’re doing so well for 85”)
- How have you tried to correct these ageist episodes/thoughts?
- If you have less power, reflect on ways that you have experienced ageism either toward others or toward yourself. How have you tried to correct these ageist episodes/thoughts?



**Disability (Developmental & Acquired):**

- Disability may be physical, cognitive, or psychiatric.
- If you do have a disability, does it interfere with work? Does it influence the types of jobs you have?
- Were you exposed to people with disabilities in your life? What were the messages you received about people with disabilities? How has this influenced your comfort/discomfort with people with disabilities?
- Do you notice that some disabilities (e.g., physical) are more acceptable than others (e.g., cognitive? psychiatric? Substance Use?).
- Reflect on some of the disabilities that your clients present with (Physical? Cognitive? Mental Illness?).
- Do you consider these disabilities? Do you tend to minimize them? Do you tend to exaggerate them?
- Consider HOW your disability status and your personal relationships with people with disabilities have shaped the way you work with clients with disabilities.
- Think about older adults with disabilities? Is your automatic thought, they're an older adult, of course they have disabilities? How have you sought to challenge this thought?
- Consider your level of power in this domain. If you have power, how have you unconsciously or consciously engaged in able-ist thoughts or actions (e.g., are you over solicitous? Under solicitous? Do you tend to speak louder or slower? Do you make assumptions?)
- How do you counter these actions?
- If you have less power in this domain, reflect on ways you have experienced ableism. How do you counter these experiences?



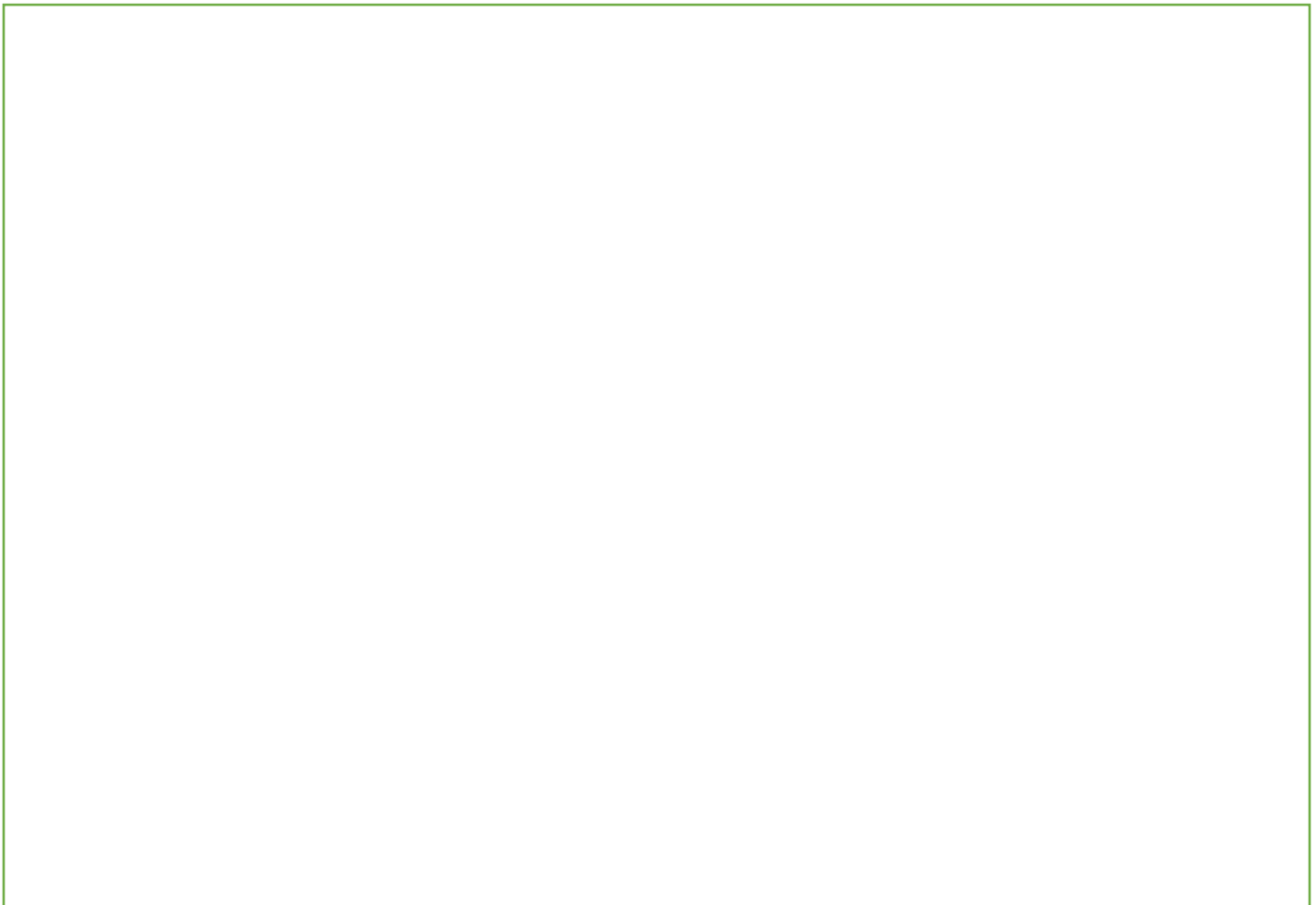
**Religion/Religious Upbringing:**

- Religion/Religious Upbringing may be related to a system of personal spiritual beliefs and it may be a cultural construct, or both (you may not subscribe to “beliefs” per se, rather experience cultural influences or vice versa)
- Think about your religious identity.
- What is your level of power in this domain? How has this level of power shaped your world view and view of others?
- Identify ways in which you may have engaged in religious oppression (e.g., have you thought that your religion is better than another? Have your religious teachings disparaged religious teachings different from your own?) Do you see these experiences as oppressive? How have you worked to correct these oppressive ideas?
- If you have a religious identity that has less power, identify ways in which you have experienced religious oppression. How have you worked to counter these experiences?
- What are your thoughts about older adults and religion?



**Ethnicity/Race:**

- What is your race/ethnicity?
- Are you in a power/privilege group (i.e. Euro-American/White) or a group with less power/privilege (people of color)?
- How has your race (as well as your level of power/privilege) shaped your experience of the world and worldview?
- How does your own racial/ethnic identity influence your relationships with clients of the same race as you? With clients who hold a race/ethnicity different than you?
- If you're White, identify ways in which you have may engaged in oppressive thoughts or actions. (Jokes? Statements? Have you been told that your well-intentioned comment had a hurtful impact?)
- What are your thoughts about older adults of color?
- Do you hold stereotypes and think, "well stereotypes exist for a reason"? How do you counter these thoughts/actions?
- If you are a person of color, reflect on times that you have experienced racism, overt and subtle. What do you do to counter these experiences?
- If you are a person of color, reflect on you experience of internalized racism (colorism is one form of this)- reflect on thoughts or actions that you have engaged in that have been oppressive to others in your same racial/ethnic group. How have you worked to counter these thoughts or experiences?

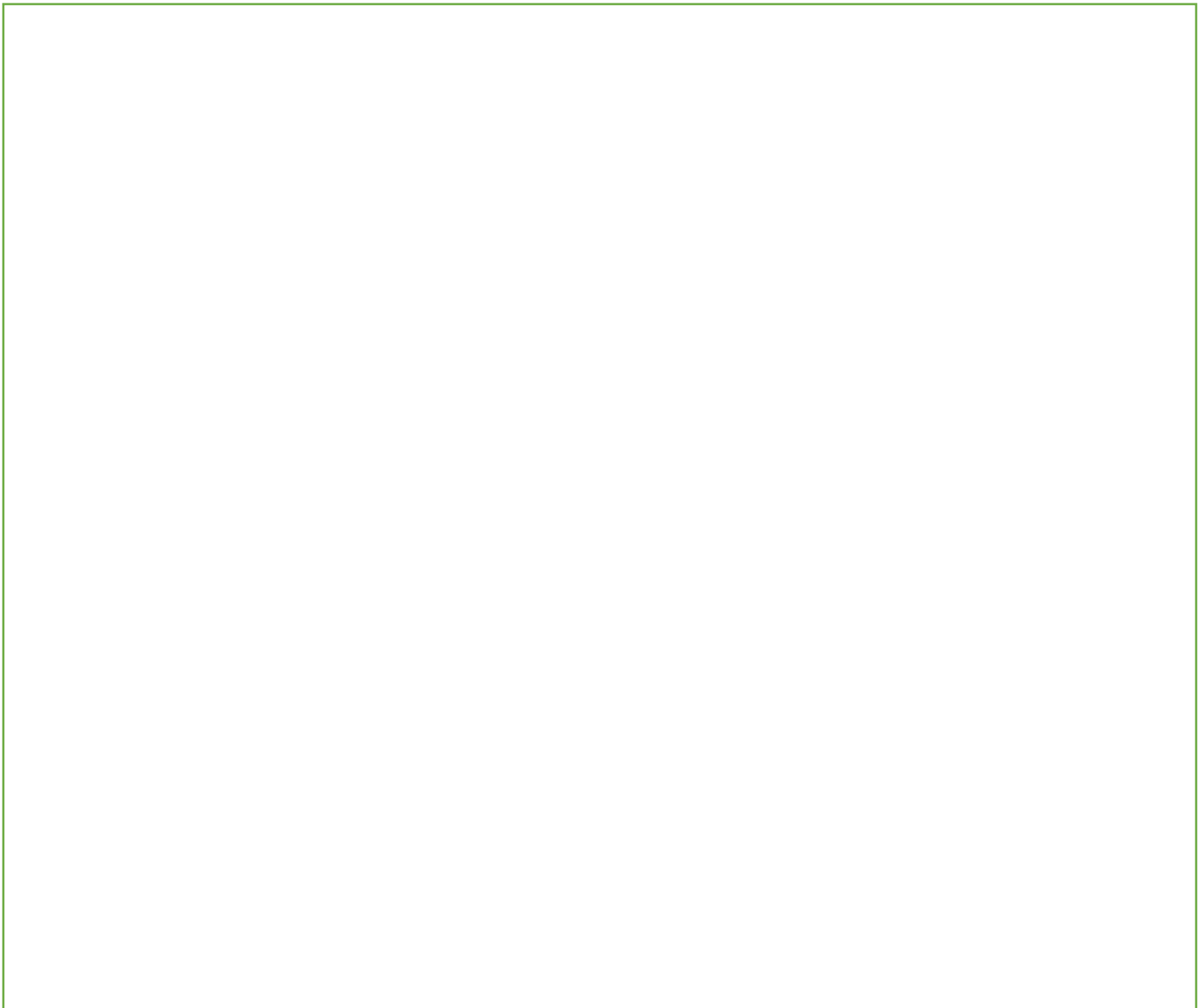


**Socio-Economic Status (SES)/Social Class:**

- Identify your SES, which includes level of education (access to education), level of income, access to resources (e.g., medical insurance, medical care), access to healthy food, community safety, etc.
- Is your current SES the same or different from your upbringing?
- Depending on where you're at in your career, income may be low, but level of education, resources, and community safety may be high. These should be considered when determining your "relative" power.
- How does your historical and current SES and relative power shape your view of individuals in your personal life as well as older adults as it relates to SES?
- Are you planning for retirement? What thoughts do you have about older adults who do not have retirement savings?
- If you have power in this domain, reflect on ways in which you have engaged in classist thoughts or actions. Reflect on ways that you have countered classist thoughts or actions.
- If you have less power in this domain, reflect on ways that you have experienced classism. How have you countered the classism that you experienced?

**Sexual Orientation:**

- Identify your sexual orientation.
- Consider your exposure to LGBTQ folks in your upbringing and in your adulthood.
- Consider the messages you received about sexual orientation. Where did you receive these messages, media, church, family?
- How have your identity, your experiences, and the messages you received shaped your view of people who identify as LGBTQ, including friends/family, and clients?
- What has been your level of interaction with LGBTQ older adults?
- What are your automatic thoughts related to LGBTQ older adults?
- What is your level of power in this domain? If you have power in this domain, reflect on ways in which you have engaged in homophobic thoughts or actions. How have you countered these thoughts or actions?
- If you have less power in this domain, reflect on ways in which you have experienced homophobia and oppression. How have you countered these experiences?





**Indigenous Background:**

- Identify if you have any indigenous heritage (i.e., Native American heritage).
- What is your level of interaction with people of Native American descent?
- What messages did you receive regarding people of Native American descent?
- If you do not have much to say about this topic, this is information in and of itself. Consider any socio-political power dynamics that may contribute to the lack of content for you in this domain.
- How might these experiences shape your work with older adults with indigenous heritage?
- What is your level of power in this domain? If you have power, reflect on ways that you have engaged in racism or oppression related to people of Native American descent. How have you worked to counter this?
- If you have less power in this domain, reflect on ways that you have experienced oppression in this domain. How have you worked to counter this?




**National Origin:**

- Identify your country of “National Origin”, meaning the country in which you were born and in which your parents were most likely from. Do you speak with an accent? Do you experience fluency in more than one culture and/or language?
- What is your level of power in this domain?
- Are you partnered with someone with the same or different national origin? Do cultural differences arise between you? If there are children, do child rearing difference arise?
- What was your early exposure to people of a different national origin than you? What messages did you receive about immigrants? Migrants? Refugees?
- How might these experiences shape your ability to interact with older adults of the same or different national origin?
- Do you work with older adults who have migrated or immigrated to the US?
- Do you know about the struggles of first-generation immigrants or migrants?
- What are your thoughts about older adults who speak a language other than English?
- If you hold power in this domain, how have you engaged in thoughts or actions that are oppressive toward immigrants, migrants, refugees, or people who speak English as a second language? How do you work to counter these thoughts or actions?
- If you hold less power in this domain, reflect on ways in which you have experienced oppression related to national origin. How do you work to counter these experiences?

**Gender/Gender Identity:**

- What is your gender? Gender identity?
- How has your gender shaped the way you experience the world and the way the world experiences you?
- What messages did you receive about Cisgender\* men? Cisgender women?
- What messages did you receive about masculinity? Femininity?
- What messages did you receive about transgender men? transgender women?
- How do these experiences and messages shape the way you conceptualize older adults with cis-gender identity? With transgender identity?
- As you think about caregivers in your family, which gender tends to be a caregiver? How did this role become established?
- Consider your level of power in this domain. Power is relative: Cis-gender men have more power than cis-gender women, who have more power than transgender men and women. How have you engaged in sexist or transphobic thoughts or actions? How have you worked to counter these oppressive thoughts or actions?
- If you have less power and have experienced sexism or transphobia, how have you worked to counter these experiences?



\*Cisgender is a term for people who have a gender identity that matches the sex that they were assigned at birth.