

The Racial Healing Handbook: Practical Activities to Help You Challenge Privilege, Confront Systemic Racism, and Engage in Collective Healing

Reading Group Guide

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WELCOME AND THANK YOU!

Hello from Anneliese, and many thanks for downloading this Reading Group Guide for *The Racial Healing Handbook*! The purpose of this Reading Group Guide is to provide suggested questions and activities to encourage conversations about the content within each of the chapters within the handbook. You can use this Reading Group Guide to help expand the learning you as an individual want to have about racial healing. In addition, group conversations about racial healing are incredibly powerful and transformative. You can start book club discussions and other types of action groups to support collective racial healing:

- Develop “Racial Healing” groups that are dedicated to exploring the ten racial healing strategies in the handbook so that group members can get immediate feedback from fellow group members on their individual development of racial healing skills and hear creative, innovative ways to put racial healing practices to work in their everyday lives.
- Design “Racial Healing” affinity groups that are specific to people of color or White people so that each group has dedicated time and space to more deeply explore racial healing and justice with one another. There could be liaisons between the two groups for further conversations, collaboration, and healing initiatives.
- Create education and advocacy groups that highlight the important role of racial healing for people of color and White people across the lifespan, and also the barriers to this racial healing, in order to identify needed advocacy and policy changes to make community settings more affirming and racially just for people of color.

LEADING RACIAL HEALING GROUP CONVERSATIONS

I wrote *The Racial Healing Handbook* to support the racial healing because racism is pervasive, structural, systemic, and feels overwhelming to change. As a community organizer and counseling psychologist, I have worked with and led many, many groups on racial healing. Along the way, I have learned that there are some predictable emotions that can come up in the beginning, middle, and end of the group, whether it is a group that meets once or longer-term. Below is a quick summary of these stages and emotions so you can anticipate how to support a group in racial healing:

- *Beginning stage:* There is a mixture of excitement and anxiety that comes up with the initial stages of talking about racial healing. People are excited, because no matter what their race, they have something deep down inside of them that moved them to come to a Racial Healing Group. On the other hand people are nervous too. People of color feel nervous, as in “Are White folks really going to be *real* about racism for once?” White folks feel nervous, as in “What am I expected to do in this group?” Having a list of Group Agreements can be a really important way to begin a group (and come back to if there are subsequent sessions – see Appendix A).
- *Middle stage:* As we deepen collective conversations about racial healing, the excitement wears off a bit and the anxiety takes over for both White folks and people of color. It is at this point that a strong facilitator helps group members lean into the discomfort and stay in the conversation but also deepens connection amongst the group members.
- *Ending stage:* One of the most surprising things about ending Racial Healing groups is that people often do not want them to end. They have developed stronger relationships and have a group of folks to bounce real-life challenges in racial healing off of. And even if there have been disagreements within the group, those have typically been worked through and created a stronger bond among participants. Still, you may need to support your group members in sharing their emotions as the Racial Healing Group comes to an end. (Chapter 4 in *The Racial Healing Handbook*, “Grieve and Name Racism,” is dedicated to grief, and it can be an excellent resource for this.)

Again, thank YOU for taking time to be a facilitator for Racial Healing groups and for bringing this handbook to “life.” I do not believe we can empower people—the choice to change in ways that lead to empowerment is one that people themselves have to make—but I do 100% believe we can create spaces for White folks and people of color can empower themselves to begin a journey of racial healing and transformation.

One important note: within your group, multiracial clients to decide for themselves which group—White or people of color—resonates the most with their lived experiences as they move through the handbook. Please support them in all the ways you can, as multiracial people often have to bridge multiple groups while not feeling quite accepted by many or all of them.

USING THE RACIAL HEALING WHEEL WITH GROUPS

In *The Racial Healing Handbook*, I distilled my research and clinical findings into the “The Racial Healing Wheel,” which provides a compass, map, and plan for exploring racial healing with yourself and others. At the core of the wheel is racial healing, surrounded by the ten practical strategies that can guide you to explore, strengthen, and evolve your own racial healing—each of which is explored in detail in the chapters that follow. Within each of the chapters are specific Racial Healing Practices that readers complete to bring the content of the handbook alive in their own life and racial healing journey.

I provide suggested questions and activities for each chapter in *The Racial Healing Handbook* below.

Introduction

- **Session Goal:** Learn the overall components of racial healing and begin the racial healing journey.
- **Suggested Questions and Activities:**
 - How much do you know about how race, racism, and White supremacy work?
 - Is it possible to unlearn the stereotyped messages we have been socialized to believe about race?
 - Why is racial healing important to you as a person of color or as a White person?
 - What are the thoughts and feelings that come up for you as we begin exploring racial healing? What support and accountability will you need in this group to explore internalized dominance as a White person or internalized racism as a person of color?
 - Review the Racial Healing Wheel on p. 6–8 of *The Racial Healing Handbook*.

Chapter 1: Know Your Racial Identity

- **Session Goal:** Explore what you know about your racial identity and what you were taught (or not taught) about race and racism.
- **Suggested Questions and Activities:**
 - Was this your first exposure to thinking about racial identity development? If so, what was that like for you? If not, how did you deepen your learning about your racial identity?
 - How do you feel about developing a “positive” racial identity? How can this help with your racial healing?
 - In *The Racial Healing Handbook*, Anneliese talks about developing a “racial curiosity muscle” (p. 14, 2nd para). Why is this important, and what would this “look like” in your own racial healing journey.
 - Did Phillip’s story or Della’s story resonate with you? Did their stories remind you of people you grew up with or know now?
 - Explore the Racial Healing Practice “What is My Racial Identity Now?” (p. 30).

Chapter 2: Explore Your Internalized Racism

- **Session Goal:** Identify belief systems about race and racism that aren't yours, and develop new and more helpful thoughts and feelings.
- **Suggested Questions and Activities:**
 - Have you thought about internalized racism and internalized dominance before as a White person or person of color? If so, what are some examples of how this internalization shows up in your everyday life? If not, what examples can you now identify in your past or present life?
 - How were you socialized in general around race, racism, privilege, oppression, and White supremacy?
 - Could you relate to the racial socialization stories of Jenna and Ajei? If so, what resonated with you? If not, do their stories remind you of other people in your personal and professional life?
 - Discuss the Racial Healing Practice "Resocializing My Racial Self" (pp. 44–46).

Chapter 3: (Re)learn the History of Racism

- **Session Goal:** Discover new knowledge and gain a new understanding about racism and how this system of oppression works.
- **Suggested Questions and Activities:**
 - Explore the Racial Healing Practice "What Did I Learn about the History of Racism?" (pp. 51–52).
 - Ibram X. Kendi says that racist ideas were developed by racist people, and Anneliese shares his following quote at the bottom of p. 53 of *The Racial Healing Handbook*: "Time and again, racist ideas have not been born and bred in the cradle of ignorant, hateful, or unpatriotic minds. Time and again, powerful and brilliant men and women have produced racist ideas in order to justify the racist policies of their era, in order to redirect the blame for their era's racial disparities away from those policies and onto Black people." Discuss how Dr. Kendi's quote make you think about the history you learned and did not learn in schools?
 - How much do you know about the history of colonization and racism?
 - How can (re)learning the histories of racism around the world help you with your own racial healing journey?
 - What is your next step in becoming your own race historian after completing the Racial Healing Practice "My Own History Lesson Plan for the History of Racism" (pp. 60–62)?

Chapter 4: Grieve and Name Racism

- **Session Goal:** Acknowledge the stages of grief that come with more awareness, learning, and action on racism.
- **Suggested Questions and Activities:**
 - Have you thought about how grief and racism interact with one another before reading this chapter? If so, what has this looked like in your own life? If not, what is it like to consider the implications for grief and racism for the first time?
 - Did you have any new realizations about the cultural norms you grew up with about grief in general and/or about grief related to racism?
 - On p. 79 of the handbook, Anneliese lists a few examples of how White folks and folks of color experience grief related to racism. Did any of these stand out to you related to your own experience? What would you add to the list that you have experienced or seen in others?
 - What did you realize your role in racism is as a person of color or White person is? How does grief relate to these roles? How can you challenge these roles and still honor the grief attached to them?
 - Explore Racial Healing Practice “Grieving the Role I Have Within the System of Racism” (pp. 80–81).

Chapter 5: Raise Your Race-Consciousness

- **Session Goal:** Learn how to act more consciously as a racial being and be a positive influence on others to do the same.
- **Suggested Questions and Activities:**
 - How is raising your race-consciousness related to and important for your own racial healing?
 - Anneliese talks about two different sources of raising your race-consciousness: education and people. What or who has been your primary source of raising your race-consciousness? If raising your race-consciousness is a new idea for you, which of these—education or people—feels like a next step for you?
 - Select one of Okun’s six Rs (p. 89) that is easier to think about doing and one that seems more challenging to do in becoming an antiracist.
 - How prepared do you feel to engage with people who say something overtly racist? How does this relate to your current racial identity development (see chapter 1)? Discuss the sentence stems on p. 100.
 - Explore Racial Healing Practice “Becoming an Antiracist in the ‘Real World’” (pp. 101–102).

Chapter 6: Catch Yourself in the Flow of Racism

- **Session Goal:** Understand that racism can arise in spontaneous and unexpected ways, and develop skills to interrupt these instances.
- **Suggested Questions and Activities:**
 - Did any of the microaggressions, microinvalidations, and microinsults listed in the chart surprise you (pp. 107–110)? Whether you were surprised or not, what did you realize about how these are connected to your healing journey?
 - What microaggressions, microinvalidations, and microinsults listed in the chart (pp. 107–110) have you experienced and/or enacted? How does it feel to share about these?
 - What are the differences between microaggressions and macroaggressions? What is the best way to respond to both? Are there differences in how you would respond to both as a person of color or White person?
 - Discuss the Racial Healing Practice on “Exploring Personal Experiences of Racial Macroaggressions” (pp. 122–126).

Chapter 7: Understand Racism in Relationships

- **Session Goal:** Recognize how racism plays out in interpersonal relationships across a variety of settings and learn to identify when it is happening.
- **Suggested Questions and Activities:**
 - How has racism influenced your friendships and intimate relationships over your life? What about your school and professional relationships? What thoughts and feelings come up as you reflect on this?
 - Do you talk about race and racism within your relationships? Why or why not?
 - What has been the most challenging conversation about race and racism you have had thus far? What has been the most productive one?
 - How do you feel about challenging racism when it comes up in your personal relationships after reading this chapter?
 - Discuss your responses to the Racial Healing Practice “Effective Messaging Strategies for Conversations about Race” (pp. 144–145).

Chapter 8: Reclaim Your Whole Racial Self

- **Session Goal:** Honor the ways you have changed and the authenticity that comes with individual racial healing.
- **Suggested Questions and Activities:**
 - How is the idea of “reclaiming your whole self” related to your racial healing journey? Which of your identities have you explored more of less of as a result of being a White person or a person of color?
 - See the chart “Social Identities, Privilege, and Oppression Outside of Race” on p. 151 of *The Racial Healing Handbook*. What are the most important identities you have that intersect with your race? Which of these important identities are related to privilege or oppression? How do these intersections of privilege and oppression influence your overall well-being as a White person or person of color?
 - There are several Racial Healing Practices in this chapter that further explore the social identities listed in the chart on p. 151. Which of these Racial Healing Practices were easier or more challenging to do for you as a person of color or White person?
 - How can you use the Racial Healing Practice “My Most Important Identity Intersections with My Race” (p. 167) to help you understand other people’s “whole racial selves”?

Chapter 9: Be a Racial Ally

- **Session Goal:** Learn ways you can help others and work for racial justice.
- **Suggested Questions and Activities:**
 - Why is being a racial ally an important part of racial healing for you?
 - Anneliese lists some dos and don’ts for being a racial ally (pp. 173–174). Which of the dos have you done before (give specific examples)? Which of the don’ts have you done before (give specific examples)?
 - What would you say are the differences and similarities in the journeys for White people and people of color working to become racial allies?
 - Do you think you can be a racial ally all of the time as a person of color or White person? Why or why not? What additional information might you need to seek out to more fully answer this question for yourself?
 - Discuss the Racial Healing Practice “Knowing My Comfort, Growth, and Danger Zones as a Racial Ally” (pp. 181–182).

Chapter 10: Engage in Collective Racial Healing

- **Session Goal:** Find ways to build circles of accountability and support for community racial healing.
- **Suggested Questions and Activities:**
 - This group has been a community of sorts as we have explored racial healing. What has this community been like for you? What have been the strengths and growing edges of this group?
 - Have you participated in racial justice communities before? What have your experiences been like?
 - Discuss the Racial Healing Practice “Exploring My Role in Racial Justice Change” (p. 198) to identify your main role in racial justice.
 - How will you know if a racial justice or other community group is “right” for you based on the list Anneliese provides on pp. 201–202 of the book?
 - Based on your experience within this reading group, what have you learned overall about yourself in this Racial Healing Group? How can you use *The Racial Healing Handbook* in the future and continue to evolve your healing journey? What support and accountability networks will you need to do so? How can you share your learning with others?

RACIAL HEALING WRAP-UP

I wish you the very best in however you use this Reading Group Guide for *The Racial Healing Handbook*! In the book, I share that racial injustice is designed to be overwhelming and to teach us that we can't have much of an impact on racism. I also share that this is a big lie, and that each of us can use our very life as an instrument of resistance to the system of racism as we create racial healing communities within our own lives. I also share in the book that racial healing is the journey that helps us not only point our internal compass toward racial liberation, but also helps us as people of color and White people to reclaim our own humanity. So, thank you dear facilitator, for doing exactly that in your own lifetime.

In deep gratitude for your work using *The Racial Healing Handbook* with yourself and your clients, families, friends, and communities,

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APPENDIX I

GROUP AGREEMENTS

This is a sample group agreement list I have used in many different types of groups. It helps you as a facilitator make sure you can not only set agreements for how people interact, but also make sure you are talking about privilege and who gets to “take up space” in the groups when it comes to privilege and oppression.

I always say at the beginning of these group agreements that this list must be understood within a variety of cultural contexts (e.g., #7: body language is super culturally informed and different across cultural backgrounds) and intersections of privilege and oppression, and for some folks the agreements can contradict themselves because of this (e.g., #4 and #8: don't be silent if you have privilege, but also don't take up so much space).

Have copies of the Group Agreements at the first meeting. I like to go around the room and have people take turns reading them and saying what they think they mean. That gives you as a facilitator a chance to see if the members understand what each agreement “means.”

Then, you can ask the group to add any agreements that they want to—or even revise the list. If there are revisions, revise the list and bring that revised list back to every subsequent meeting. This will not only help the group with adhering to the group agreements, but also give you a way when you have to redirect someone who is taking up too much space or draw someone out more whom you would like to hear more from in the group.

1. **Listen actively.** Respect others when they are talking.
2. **Speak from your own experience** instead of generalizing (“I” instead of “they,” “we,” and “you”).
3. Do not be afraid to **respectfully challenge one another** by asking questions, but refrain from personal attacks—focus on ideas.
4. **Participate to the fullest of your ability.** Community growth depends on the inclusion of every individual voice. For White participants and others with privilege, check in with yourself to make sure your silence is not perpetuating the status quo.
5. **Instead of invalidating** somebody else's story with your own spin on their experience, **share your own story and experience.**
6. **The goal is not to agree**—it is to **gain a deeper understanding.**
7. **Be conscious of body language and nonverbal responses.** They can be as disrespectful as words.

8. **Share the air.** Notice if your voice is dominating the space, if so, step back, allow other voices, particularly those from more marginalized communities to speak.
9. **Challenge yourself by choice.** If there are topics that are triggering that come up, that you would like more privacy with, or that you just aren't sure about, be sure to "pass" when it's your turn to share. Growth and resilience comes from being challenged to grow, but you don't want to be in the "danger zone" of oversharing and going beyond your own personal boundaries.

Excerpted and slightly adapted from: <http://www.edchange.org/multicultural/activities/groundrules.html>.