

# Moving Towards Equity

## A PERSONAL GUIDE

There are moments when we want to be more intentional and active with regards to equity issues such as racism, transphobia, ableism and so forth, but we are unsure of what we can do and afraid of making mistakes.

**DON'T BE AFRAID...**

**Equity work requires the full person, it is emotional, intentional and can sometimes make us uncomfortable.**

There are times when we make attempts to engage in equity issues we are not prepared for and make mistakes.

The key is not to be silenced by the fear of making mistakes or being misunderstood, but to self-reflect, learn, explore, recognize and commit to various forms of engagement and action. This can be a circular process.

**THIS GUIDE CAN BE USED AS A TOOL FOR A PERSON WANTING TO  
EXPLORE THE POSSIBILITIES OF MOVING TOWARDS EQUITY.**

# THINGS TO KNOW

## BEFORE USING THE GUIDE...

### WHAT IS EQUITY?

**Equity is an approach to ensure everyone has access to the same opportunities regardless of difference.**

Equity is rooted in social justice and fairness. Equity acknowledges the histories of discrimination (i.e., colonization, enslavement, sexism etc.) that has produced present-day inequities for some groups and privileges and advantages for others.

Equity begins by acknowledging that there are unequal starting points for some and makes a commitment to correct and address the imbalances.

Equity is not about lowering standards but is about acknowledging that everyone has different needs to attain access and opportunities. Equity aims to create opportunities to address the diverse needs of equity-deserving/denied persons and groups and highlights what is required to gain access and opportunities.

### WHO ARE EQUITY-DESERVING/DENIED PERSONS OR GROUPS?

Equity-deserving/denied persons and groups refers to communities that have been historically or are presently marginalized and denied equitable access to supports and services. Equity-deserving/denied persons and groups may experience barriers from an individual, institutional and/or systemic level based on biases, beliefs of prejudice and acts of discrimination, impeding their ability to thrive within their social, political and economic environments. Some examples of these belief systems are racism, transphobia, ablism, sexism and so forth. Equity-deserving/denied persons and groups are the communities impacted by discriminatory belief systems that have been engrained within society.

# Steps to becoming equity minded...

## **HONEST SELF-REFLECTION**

It is important to ask yourself, what role do I play in enhancing or impeding equity outcomes?

Self-reflection is an important step when aiming to become more equity minded. Self-reflection can help to answer important questions. Several questions to explore your current positionality may include: where and how do I hold power and privilege? Do I appropriately use my power and privilege for the betterment of equity-deserving/denied persons or groups? Do I believe that my power and privilege inherently make me better than others who possess less power and privilege? Where and how am I denied access and opportunities because of not having power and privilege?

Self-reflection allows for the exploration and interrogation of one's attitudes, biases and may also help someone identify their unconscious biases (i.e., Do you believe in certain stereotypes?).

Once you have self-reflected and understand your beliefs and biases, as we all have them, you may begin the process of learning.

## **LEARNING TO EDUCATE YOURSELF**

To become equity-minded it is critical to begin a journey that allows you to learn about equity-deserving/denied persons and groups. Try to understand the multiple histories connected to the legacy of social barriers equity-deserving/denied persons and groups experience on a day-to-day basis.

Do your research with humility and intentionality. Do not assume equity-deserving/denied persons or groups are always available to share their lived experiences for the purpose of your learning, as it can cause emotional labour and potentially be harmful. Go out on your own and find safe ways to learn (i.e., conferences, events, museums, leading literature about issues related to equity-deserving/denied groups, podcast, films etc.).

## EXPLORATION

As you build your analysis to become a more equity-minded person, challenge yourself by exploring less prominent discourses or ways of knowing. Examine the ways in which knowledges are produced and what knowledges hold more esteem than others. Think about the implications of these structures to equity-deserving/denied persons and groups. How are equity-deserving/denied persons and groups voices being silenced?

## RECOGNIZE

Equity-mindedness comes with the willingness to be responsible in recognizing gaps and barriers that impact equity-deserving persons/groups. You can ask yourself, what are obvious gaps in policies, programs, services, supports etc. However, think of the gaps and barriers that are less obvious, systems that may cause alienation and isolation for equity-deserving persons/groups, even if non-intentional. It is impact that is important, not the intention.

## ENGAGEMENT AND ACTION

Find opportunities to engage in conversations about equity. It can be with friends, family, and fellow colleagues. Remember that these conversations may be uncomfortable, which is why it is important to have someone versed in equity to support the conversation when possible.

When it comes to action, there are many ways to dedicate your time and commit to equity causes. For instance, you can join committees or community organizations that deal with equity issues directly. This can help support you in establishing networks with equity-minded persons and gaining a better understanding of best practices.

Equity mindedness can be fostered through individual, professional, and organizational levels.

### SOURCES

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