Skill Sets of Agents

Key definitions:

- **Skill Sets** = our toolbox, the language/thinking we use to respond to situations, reactions that express our understanding of the world
- **Agents** = members of the dominant/overvalued/privileged group
- **Targets** = members of a marginalized/undervalued/oppressed group

Common characteristics of each position include…

Indifference	Distancing	Inclusion	Awareness	Allyship
Use of Individual Lens			**Use of Systemic Lens**	
Agents to not notice the existence of Target group members "I don't know any…" I've never met any…" "It's not my problem" Characterized by passive aversion Agent is conditioned to be unconscious to the Target, and therefore doesn't even have to try to ignore Targets This position requires the least energy because everything is filtered through the dominant society's view. Skills used to navigate society are the default	Agents hold members of Target group at arm's length There is an emphasis on differences between self and Target group Characterized by three different approaches: 1. "I don't have anything against _____ (out loud)… "I just don't want them living around me." (internal) 2. Overtly bigoted –or- attitude of wanting to help convert Target (savior) 3. Pseudo-valuing ideas "They're magical, or so spiritual." Often goes with collecting artifacts from the Target group or imitating culture style	Agents focus on similarities between Target group and oneself "We're all God's children." "Everyone suffers." Agent experiences this as liberating Agent recognizing the limitations to this skills set is difficult. Many never advance beyond appreciating the Target Agent's norms remain the standard Expectation is for the Target to conform **Danger:** Since Agents know they don't hold or subscribe to negative views of the Target, they can resist the perspective that oppression is a supremacy problem Focus stays on individual prejudice and discrimination	Agents see systemic oppression and privilege clearly. "I can't believe I never saw this before." Characterized by an initial sense of immobilization, feelings of guilt or shame Agent is rightly horrified by realization of past failures to recognize or interrupt injustice There is a frequent movement back to inclusion because Awareness skills are so difficult Agents' primary task is to listen to Targets to learn about their experience of oppression Requires determination and support because the new awareness is hard to hold	Agents are fully aware of reality of oppression and privilege Agents recognize oppressive systems' dehumanizing effects Characterized by an ability to think/act Agents acknowledge they can never fully understand the experience of Targets Shift is from dreading experiencing new awareness to welcoming it Movement into helping others wake up to the realities of systemic oppression Increasingly able to work with others to move them to the next skill set without judgment Focus may be on listening, speaking out, gently helping other Agents learn new skills, etc.

Source: Neito, L. & Boyer, M. (2007). Understanding Oppression: Strategies in Addressing Power and Privilege Part 3: Skill Sets for Agents – To download full .pdf go to: https://beyondinclusion.files.wordpress.com/2011/07/ask_leticia_part_3.pdf