

Scenario Response Worksheet

At a yoga studio that serves a rather diverse clientele, a statue of Ganesh sits on an altar in the front of the room. The white yoga teacher begins with a chant to Ganesh and the last pose has the participants holding their feet facing the altar. Three Indian women are in the class, 1 who is Hindu. After a few weeks of attending classes, two of the Indian women tell the instructor that it doesn't make sense for the Ganesh chant to be used as a mental health tool, that it is disrespectful to ever have feet facing an altar, and that the studio has pictures of Hindu gods in the bathroom, which is not okay. The white instructor freezes, not knowing how to respond. The owner of the studio, overhearing the critique, comes over to tell the Indian women that it is okay for the gods to be in the restroom, saying "You have to think about Hindu gods like a disco ball. Each facet is like another aspect of god, but they're all god and can be used in many ways as part of any healing practice." After the women leave, the owner tells the somewhat rattled instructor not to take the criticism too seriously, saying "I don't understand why they think god can't see you pee."

1. What are the tensions in this scenario?

2. To what degree do the themes in this scenario play out in communities of which you are a part? Where do you think they come from (culturally, theologically, etc.)? How are they supported?

3. How is privilege and/or racism manifesting?

4. How would you feel if you were in this situation?

5. What would you say in response? (*For faith communities: What spiritual/theological beliefs help ground you in that response?*)

In small groups:

6. How would you hope people would respond to this situation?

7. How could the use of “both/and” thinking inform the response?