

Being “Clueless” is No Longer an Excuse:
 Infusing “The Work” into Everyday Practices

Frances E. Kendall, Ph.D.
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Identifying Where We Have Privilege

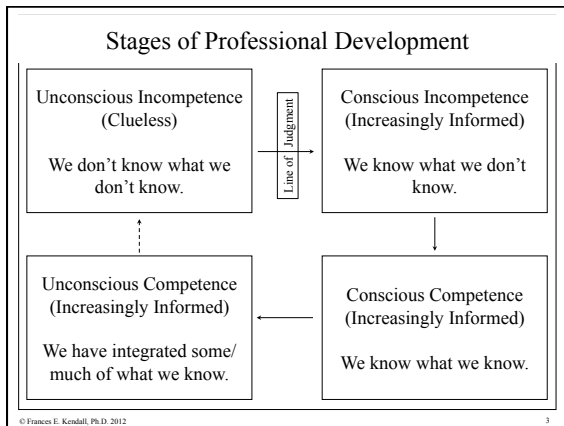
A Brief Definition of Privilege: Unearned disproportional access to resources, the ability to influence, and to power.

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Looking at My Privileges

1. As you look at the Railroad Tracks exercise, put an “X” in each square that specifies one element of your identity both above and below the tracks.
2. Choose one square *below* the tracks where you are clearest about the unearned privileges you don’t receive. Identify 3 specific privileges you don’t have.
3. Select two squares *above* the tracks where you are clearest about the specific effects of those privileges on your life.
 - How did you learn those specifics?
 - How can you use that mode of learning to examine places where you could easily be clueless?
 - Here’s a hint: What action or assumption do you do/make routinely that you are not particularly conscious about, e.g., don’t worry about the cost of gas, assume that someone has a checking account or a credit card or that the people you work with have plenty to eat.

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Stage 1: Unconscious Incompetence or “Clueless”

- ❖ You don't know what you don't know.
- ❖ “Clueless”--lacking understanding or knowledge.

Indications

1. You're not aware of the Other's reality. It rarely, if ever, crosses your mind. You have so much privilege in an area—your gender, your race, your sexual orientation, your religion—that you don't think daily about how the identity or issue distinguishes you from others.

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Stage 1: Unconscious Incompetence (Cont'd)

Indications

2. You're not moved to focus on that identity in yourself. It's a condition about which you have the luxury of not having to be very curious or accountable to others.
3. Unless pushed, you don't pay attention to your or others' behaviors related to that identity. If someone mentions it, you think they are making a big deal about nothing.
4. You don't really want to know about the Others' experiences as a group.

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Stage 1: Unconscious Incompetence (Cont'd)

Indications

5. You can be dismissive or flippant with little conscious consequence. “You know, I don’t have a clue... or “I just don’t see color... or “hipster” racism. (See “A Complete Guide to Hipster Racism”: jezebel.com/5905291/a-complete-guide-to-hipster-racism)
6. You don’t see your lack of knowledge as incompetence.

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Line of Judgment

Indications

1. You make judgments, conscious or subconscious, about the identities of the person or people with whom you are interacting.
2. You make excuses about not changing your behavior or judgments about others.
3. You tell yourself it’s not important to think about these issues.
4. Usually these responses are based in fear and/or arrogance.
5. Unless you go through your fears, you can’t get to conscious incompetence.

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Stage 2: Conscious Incompetence

❖ You know what you don’t know.

Indications

1. You are becoming increasingly informed, though it’s not comfortable. You’re finding out how little you know about others’ realities.
2. You discover information about yourself, those you love, and those people and places you have held in high regard and you are pushed to see the world differently. Things are not as you thought, and you move into cognitive dissonance.
3. You begin to question what you thought you knew. You feel incompetent and often want to forget you began this journey.
4. You begin to listen differently and to ask questions that you don’t already know the answers to.

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Stage 3: Conscious Competence

- ❖ You know what you know.
- ❖ You are increasingly aware and continually push yourself to learn more.

Indications

1. You set about the task of learning more by putting yourself in new and often uncomfortable situations.
2. You acknowledge that you need to know more about your own privilege and that of others. You want to gain more competence in working effectively about issues of difference with those who are like you and those who are different.

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Stage 3: Conscious Competence (Cont'd)

Indications

3. You talk with others about what you're learning and work to bring them into conversations that can create a more competent workplace.
4. You strive daily to be an ally to people who don't have your sets of privileges, not to take care of them but to align yourself with them.

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Stage 4: Unconscious Competence

- ❖ You have integrated much of your learning.

Indications

1. Still, you are very aware about how much more you need to know about your realities, those of others, and the systems in which you function.
2. Your perspectives and actions have changed. You interrupt bias when you experience it.
3. You take on those who have your privileges and are showing their incompetence, not out of arrogance but out of the desire to create a new environment for everyone.
4. You focus on creating more equitable policies and practices in your work situation.

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Using the Stages of Professional Development

In the beginning...

- ❖ One of the best ways to infuse “the work” into our daily work is to move from a place of questioning rather than one of knowing. Begin to ask questions, first of ourselves and then of others.
- ❖ To most effectively use the strategy of asking questions, the kind of questions we ask is key. Ask questions to genuinely learn something new or to see things in a different way, to probe more deeply, avoiding the simplest, most expected answers.
- ❖ Ask questions about which you are genuinely curious and to which you don’t have an answer.

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Using the Stages of Professional Development

In the beginning...(Cont’d)

- ❖ For example, if you’re at Stage One about a particular issue, begin to wonder how you got there and what’s keeping you there. What’s stopping you from moving forward?
- ❖ What can you learn from standing in the Line of Judgment? What judgments come up, what fears? And what are you going to do to address each one?
- ❖ If you’re addressing this particular issue as a work team, share the questions that emerge for you. Learning from other’s questions is often more profitable than learning from others’ answers.

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Using the Stages of Professional Development

In the beginning...(Cont’d)

- ❖ The underlying nugget here, of course, is that you are in conversation with others about something that for all of you hasn’t been talked about enough.
 - The more there is real conversation, the more open you will be to hearing another’s reality.
 - The greater your preparation for something about which you are nervous, the more likely you are to feel comfortable in the situation.

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Using the Stages of Professional Development

Moving to Action...

- ❖ The questioning stage is life-long as you move from stages of cluelessness to conscious competence and maybe unconscious consciousness. During that journey, you also must be taking action for change.
- ❖ Here again, often the tactic is questioning but for a different end-goal. In this specific instance you want to help someone get what she/he needs.

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Using the Stages of Professional Development

Moving to Action...(Cont'd)

- ❖ Let's say you're a staff member in the financial aid office. A freshman student walks very reluctantly into your office to get some information. He's a first generation Latino student. His family lives right across the border. A medical emergency has arisen. But you don't know any of that yet...

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Moving to Action...(Cont'd)

- ❖ Considerations from the Example:
 - Your goal here is to keep the person talking until you understand what he needs, giving positive reinforcement along the way.
 - "Tell me about what you need." No helpful information is forthcoming.
 - "What happened that brought you in today?" "I talked to my mom."
 - "Would you mind telling me what you talked about?" And so on.

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Moving to Action...(Cont'd)

❖ Considerations:

- (You are wondering if he is here legally. You rein your mind back in. That part is not your business...
- Your job is to provide information. You can't not help him regardless of your feelings.)
- So the interaction goes on, with you putting your all into helping him get what he needs.
- You're infusing "the work" with your work.
- More questions: Ask yourself how well you did. Be honest. If another staff member heard the interaction you ask her or him. Listen. It's hard. Still do it.

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Decision Making

1. Assessing the information I have:
 - a. What do I know?
 - b. Is the information I have accurate?
 - c. Do I have enough information?
 - d. What else do I need to know?
2. Whose voices have I heard? Whose voices and perspectives have I not heard?
3. Based on my privilege what might I be missing or what information might be skewed?
4. Where am I in Stages of Development? Am I sure? What would others who are different across this issue say?

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What Are Some of the Costs of Being Willfully Clueless?

1. You don't do your job as well as you could.
2. You fail to build authentic work support and community, which, in turn, makes you less competent in your work.
3. You collude in your institution remaining inhospitable to people who are considered Other.

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Am I Making Headway?

- ❖ How do I know if I am inching ahead to “increasingly informed”?
- ❖ How does that change my level of comfort about the issue?
- ❖ What will motivate me to continue to learn and shift positions?

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