



Learning Adulthood and the Power Chart Exercise¹

by **Paul Kivel**

Tell the group that you are going to read a series of statements and that each person to whom a statement applies should stand up after that statement is read. Tell the group that everyone is being asked to participate. Those who are physically unable to stand may raise their hand to indicate that they are part of the group standing.

- Each participant should decide for themselves whether the statement applies to them or not.
- If they are unwilling to stand for a particular statement that applies to them they may pass for that statement but should notice any feelings they have about not standing.
- Explain that the exercise will be done in silence to allow participants to notice the feelings that come up during the exercise and to make it safer for all participants.
- After a statement is read and people have stood for a few moments, ask participants to sit down and read the next statement.

Please stand up silently if

1. your dress or appearance was ever criticized or ridiculed by an adult
2. you ever felt that your racial or ethnic group, your gender, your religious or cultural heritage or some other group that you are a part of was not represented, was represented inaccurately, or was put down in the curriculum you were taught
3. you ever received the message from a teacher, a student, or an administrator that people like you were not normal, were lazy, were not intelligent, or were otherwise different or inferior and therefore not deserving of full respect
4. you ever received the message that there was something different and wrong about your family, that it wasn't

¹ Adapted from exercises developed by the Oakland Men's Project and the Todos Institute.
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normal, or that your family was inferior because of class, race, gender, sexual orientation, religion, or other kinds of difference

5. you were ever disciplined unfairly, arbitrarily or inappropriately by an adult and could not challenge it because you were a young person
6. you ever felt your physical safety threatened or violated at school
7. you were ever the object of a degrading comment or put down or made to feel ashamed or humiliated by a teacher or by another young person
8. You ever made a degrading comment or put down a fellow student or other young person
9. you were ever yelled at, commented upon, whistled at, touched, or harassed in a public place
10. you ever yelled at, commented upon, whistled at, touched or harassed another person in a public place
11. you ever heard degrading jokes, comments, or put-downs about women, people of color, Jews, people with disabilities, or lesbians and gays made in your presence
12. you were ever the object of slurs, comments, put-downs, or violence due to prejudice
13. you ever made degrading jokes, comments, or put-downs about women, people of color, Jews, people with disabilities, or lesbians or gays
14. you ever ignored or downplayed someone else's discomfort, embarrassment, lack of safety, or fear of being attacked, or belittled someone for being uncomfortable or scared
15. you were ever in a situation in which you felt conspicuous, uncomfortable, or alone because you were the only representative of your racial or ethnic group, gender, or sexual orientation
16. you were ever ignored, served last, or watched suspiciously in a store because you were a young person
17. you have ever received less than full respect, attention, or response from a doctor, police officer, court official, or other professional because of your age, race, gender, sexual orientation, or physical ability
18. you have ever been hit by an adult or a peer



19. you were ever forced to fight or otherwise defend yourself against another young person
20. you ever drank, took other drugs, overate, underrate, or did something dangerous or unsafe in order to cover your feelings or hide the pain

After the exercise ask people to pair up to talk about what feelings and thoughts came up for them participating in the exercise.

Reassemble the group and facilitate a group discussion of the feelings, thoughts, reflections, and insights that people want to share.

This is not a stand alone exercise. It should only be conducted in the context of a workshop or talk on adultism, power, violence, and safety which allows the group to process the feelings, thoughts, and issues which arise from participating in the exercise.

For further information on these issues see *Helping Teens Stop Violence: A Practical Guide for Counselors, Educators, and Parents*. Allan Creighton with Paul Kivel. Hunter House Publishers (1992). And *Making the Peace: A 15-Session Violence Prevention Curriculum for Young People*. Paul Kivel & Allan Creighton. Hunter House Publishers (1996).

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