

## Interrupting IRS and Whiteness – The Work of White Accomplices

### Practices for the self

- Being clear about who we are in the world, our unique contributions, and our purpose as racial justice advocates and organizers. Being able to articulate to ourselves and others why we personally are invested in racial equity and why it matters to white people.
- Practicing self-talk that affirms our complicity in racism: Racism is not our fault but we are responsible.
- Doing your own healing work: What trauma, patterns or other unwell ways of being
- Hitting the pause button to slow ourselves down, so we don't react and can recognize when we've had our trauma responses activated. This will help us get to know our own patterns of IRS and our own triggers, and see them as not WHO we are, but as behaviors we can work to replace with ones that are liberating for all.
- Countering responses from within you that include self-blame, flight and fight, with practices that help us understand our emotions and by having practices that remind you of your humanity.
- Knowing and making our unique contributions.
- Cultivating our own sense of balance, belief in self, coming from place of wholeness and authenticity (not ego).
- Cultivating networks of other white people who are practicing antiracist accomplicehood, so you can talk through your struggles in the work of undoing your own whiteness and showing up as allies and accomplices. So you can challenge and support each other.
- Being mindful not to seek affirmation or to "get off the hook" from white people who will try to absolve you from any form of racism, tell you you're right, or tell you that people of color are wrong/bad/messed up.
- Letting go of the things we have to give up in order to be accomplices, such as:
  - Comfort.
  - Any expectations or presumptions of emotional safety that is either uninterrupted or immediately restored.
  - At times, guaranteed physical safety.
  - Control over other people and over the land.
  - Relationships with some other white people.
  - Social status, niceties from neighbors and colleagues, the certainty of your job.
  - "Fitting in" all the time. (Be willing to be rejected by other white people.)
  - Accepting jobs and promotions when we are not qualified, including racial equity jobs.
  - White normative behaviors that only work for us when we're operating as individuals.

### Practices for interrupting others' whiteness

- Call "in and forward" rather than "out". This is about building relationships and networks, about bringing white people into racial justice.
- Practice naming things that are harmful without blaming the person. If the person still doesn't want to hear it, say that: "I feel like I've shared my experience of you/my observations of the situation several times now and you're not open to hearing it. I hope that at some point in the future we can have this conversation and that you'll be open to understanding some of the ways that you perpetuated harm."
- Be honest and implicate yourself either in the moment or in past experiences in which you acted or thought similarly. Don't blame others. Don't distance. Don't make yourself seem "better". None of us is. At one moment someone else may be the bringer of harm

and at another moment it could be you. Find connections. Empathize. Don't be superior – you are also white and what someone else did today you may do tomorrow.

- The Center for Social Inclusion/Race Forward Talking about Race Toolkit, including the practice of A.C.T. (Affirm, Counter, Transform):  
<https://www.centerforsocialinclusion.org/talking-race-toolkit/>

**MINDFULNESS practice** can help us slow down so that we are not reactive but are present and able to focus on our connection with others rather than engage in othering. Research shows that by practicing mindful awareness, we are able to be present, to care for our own and others' feelings, whatever they are, as opposed to reacting based on past behaviors and patterns, so we are able to reduce our own racial, gender and other biases.

Using mindfulness practice to hit the pause button: R.A.I.N. on Blame (from Tara Brach, [www.tarabrach.com](http://www.tarabrach.com)):

1. **Recognize:** Become aware of what you are feeling and your desire to suppress, avoid, or completely give into that feeling as if it's the end of your learning.
2. **Allow:** Feel the feeling. Acknowledge that it's there and don't try to fight it.
3. **Investigate:** Explore that feeling. Where do you feel it in your body? What does it make you want to do? What negative self talk is underneath that feeling? If it's anger, can you feel the fear or sadness underlying it? If it's defensiveness, can you identify what it is that you're trying to defend or prove?
4. **Nurture:** Tell yourself that you're human. You make mistakes. You are worthy. You are loved. You love you.

RAIN on Blame can work for blame that comes from a member of a dominant group (such as white, non-trans male, non-disabled, etc.) feeling resistant to feedback that challenges them and it can work for a member of a non-dominant group (such as people of color, female or trans or gender non-conforming, or disabled) who is experiencing marginalization and dealing with feelings of unworthiness that come with that.

### **Some of the different ways we may know if we're being accomplices**

- People of color feel supported and feel they can trust us.
- We are not centered.
- We may feel uncomfortable, like we're taking a risk.
- Other white people may be angry, feeling shame/guilt/all of the suppressed emotions coming up, and we as accomplices may feel targeted, marginalized or experience retaliation.
- Other white people feel that we are genuinely trying to build relationship with them.
- We can only operate as accomplices if we are coming from a place of our authentic, humane selves, not our egoic selves, the part that holds our internalized superiority.