Choosing to Be W.O.K.E.

Strategies to Sound the Alarm so You Don't Stay Asleep

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I'm Ashley Nicole Smith, and I coach red-tape cutters, status quo disruptors, and change-makers. People on campuses, in corporations, and communities with an unwavering belief that we can educate those around us about injustice, and together, we can change the world. Now, more than ever, people are counting on us to do our part. Join me for our W.O.K.E. journey.

I've been blessed to have had some really unique learning experiences. I hold a Bachelor's in Elementary Education, an endorsement in ELL, a graduate certificate from the International Institute of Restorative Practices, a Master's, and a Doctorate in School Administration K-12. I've been a teacher, an administrator, a district hearing officer, facilitated district trainings in equity and literacy but I'm most proud of the fact that my students taught me everything I know.

I was perfectly executing the workshop model in my 7th grade ELA class and one moment changed my life. A student called me out for not "seeing" them. Suddenly, I woke up and I never knew I had been asleep. This started a 12-year journey where I began creating a system to initiate institutional healing. The big surprise, my own wounds closed while helping others.

I design educational experiences to engage and empower all learners including district office, educators, families, students, and community leaders. My life's goal is to create equitable spaces in organizations. I am extremely passionate about helping individuals become the best version of themselves. That's what being a Strugglish Superhero is all about.
## Working Definitions & Examples

Create a working definition of the word. Then, give an example of the word that further explains your definition.

### Diversity

- **Diversity**

### Equity

- **Equity**

### Inclusion

- **Inclusion**

### Belonging

- **Belonging**

### Reflection questions:

- How are they alike? Different? Where is there overlap?
- Where do these words show up in your personal, professional, and private worlds?
- What’s your origin story for each word?
Goal: To distinguish between your imaginary and the reality by asking yourself questions.

"W" Reflection Prompts

1. WHAT DO YOU THINK YOU KNOW?
2. WHO OR WHAT DO YOU PERCEIVE AS A THREAT?
3. WHAT DO YOU FEAR OR WHAT SCARES YOU?
4. WHY DO YOU SEE IT THAT WAY?
5. WHEN ARE YOU CHOOSING TO FEEL THAT WAY?
6. WHAT DO YOU NEED TO UNDERSTAND?
7. WHAT POWER DO YOU HAVE IN THIS SITUATION?
8. WHAT CAN YOU DO TO EMPOWER OTHERS?

Write or draw some things you need to keep in mind when you're in a situation where you need clarity or to remain curious about what's really going on.

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W.O.K.E. Strategies

- Ask yourself questions to become curious about what you perceive is happening and why it's happening. Interrogate the event.
- The story you're telling yourself is important. Trace your mindset, value, belief, or emotion to an experience that stands out in your mind. Think about when you first encounter with that storyline.
- Analyze what you could be missing, what information you need to ensure you're "seeing" everything in the right light, and what action or exposure would help you shift your mindset.

## Reality Checking Chart

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Event</th>
<th>Emotion</th>
<th>Early Encounter</th>
<th>Exposure</th>
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Goal: To close the knowledge gap by figuring out what information you need to know and how it'll help.

"O" Reflection Prompts

1. WHAT DO I NEED TO KNOW?
2. WHERE CAN I FIND THIS INFORMATION?
3. IS THERE SOMEONE I CAN SPEAK WITH SO I CAN ASK QUESTIONS OR HEAR THEIR STORY?
4. WHY IS THIS SOMETHING I NEED TO KNOW?
5. HOW CAN I USE THIS INFORMATION TO SERVE OTHERS MORE EFFECTIVELY?
6. HOW WILL THIS INFORMATION CHANGE MY CURRENT PERSPECTIVES OR PRACTICES?

Write or draw some things you need to keep in mind when you're in a situation where you need information about what's really going on.
W.O.K.E. Strategies

- **Investigate**: We live in a time when there is no shortage of information. The problem is finding reliable sources of data that present both sides of an argument. Use Google Scholar to find articles.
- **Integrate**: Join different social media groups where you can hear sides about an issue. See where the new information fits in with what you already know.
- **Inquire**: If you are curious and trying to learn, most people don't mind sharing their story. Tell them that you are doing some research and you want to ask questions about their experience.

### Information Checking

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What do you want to know?</th>
<th>Why do you want to know that info?</th>
<th>Where are you going to find the info?</th>
<th>How will you apply what you learn?</th>
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Goal: To engage in average activism by addressing access, ability, and/or achievement by adjusting 1 everyday activity.

"K" Reflection Prompts

1. What is an area of where groups are being underserved, marginalized, or victimized?
2. Who is furthest from opportunity or who is being affected?
3. What changes are within your control?
4. What is one adjustment you could make that would have maximum impact?
5. Were your actions in alignment with what you were hoping to achieve?

Write or draw some things you need to keep in mind when you're in a situation where you can take action or make an adjustment that would have an impact.
W.O.K.E. Strategies

- **Acknowledge an area and who has been affected**: How can you open up access? Where can you level the playing field to accommodate for all abilities? Who is achieving and who is not? Why? What supports need to be put in place?
- **Act in alignment with your assignment**: Focus on what you can control and where you do have power. In your role, there is something you can do to meet a need. Don’t be afraid to ask what supports would be helpful or what you could do to meet a need.
- **Assess your achievement**: Did your action have the impact you were hoping to have? If so, you’re on the right track, layer it with the next step. If not, what is a doable switch that you can make.

## Adjustment Checking

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<th>Assignment</th>
<th>Assessment</th>
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Goal: To empower everyone regardless of our personal affiliations.

"E" Reflection Prompts

1. WHAT IS A WAY THAT YOU CAN EXPOSE YOURSELF TO ANOTHER WAY OF THINKING?
2. HOW CAN YOU CONNECT WITH OTHERS TO BELIEVE DIFFERENTLY THAN YOU DO?
3. WHAT ARE THE UNDERLYING EMOTIONS?
4. WHAT FEELINGS ARE COMFORTABLE FOR YOU AND WHAT MAKES YOU UNCOMFORTABLE? WHY?
5. WHAT DO YOU THINK IS OKAY TO EXPRESS AND WHAT SHOULD REMAIN HIDDEN? WHY?

Write or draw some things you need to keep in mind when you're in a situation where equity is a factor regardless of your group affiliation.
W.O.K.E. Strategies

• **Experience:** Experiences produce expectations until new encounters, emotional exchanges, and/or environments begin the evolution.
  - Write a new experience, emotional exchange, and/or environmental shift you could provide in the area you chose for the underserved population group you selected.
  - When will you do this?
  - How can you measure it?

• **Extension, Expansion, & Enrichment:** Embrace educational elements that explore extension, expansion, & enrichment rather than deficits.
  - Extension: How can we affirm what our students already know and build on their strengths?
  - Expansion: How can we affirm who our students are and expand their perspectives and knowledge base?
  - Enrichment: How can we affirm the experiences our students have had to explore them deeper?

• **Embed:** Embed equity in the environment by enlisting stakeholders and elevating uncommon leaders.
  - Ensemble: Who will be our focus?
  - Endorsements: Who should be on the team?
  - Embedding Equity: Whose voices are missing?
  - Elevating Uncommon Leaders: Who has characteristics that weren't previously valued?