

Using the Wheel of Privilege and Power [Coaching Demonstration] | Episode 257

Elena: If you've ever struggled to introduce the concept of how identity impacts our work, this one's for you. Hi, friends, I'm Elena Aguilar and this is the Bright Morning podcast in video form. Every week I'll help you lead coaching conversations that build connection and spark real change.

Hello friends. Welcome to the Bright Morning Podcast. I'm your host Elena Aguilar, and in each podcast episode you'll hear me demonstrate how you can lead conversations that build connection and spark change. Today you're going to hear what it sounds like to use the wheel of privilege and power in a coaching conversation.

This tool can be transformative. It helps clients deepen their self-awareness, explore identity, and better understand how systems of privilege and oppression show up in their experiences and in their work. So before we dive into the demo, I wanna say this, introducing identity exploration to your clients is advanced coaching work.

It requires you to do your own deep reflection, to be grounded in your own sociopolitical identity, and to be able to hold space with skill and care. So if you haven't already spent time with the skill session on the wheel of privilege and power in the coach Learning Library, then I strongly recommend starting there.

You will find videos, scripts, and step-by-step guidance on how to introduce both identity, reflection, and the wheel itself. This is essential groundwork and you can find a link to that in the show notes. Alright, let's jump into this coaching conversation. And as you do notice how I introduce the tool, the questions I ask, and the tone I use to hold the space.

So here's what you need to know about this role play demonstration. First, I'll be coaching Jess, who is a former elementary teacher who will be channeling her past self around the time that she had been teaching for about five years. I. The second thing to know is that Jess and I had been working together at the same school site for the past several years, but this is my first year coaching her.

So there is relational trust built, but this is a new to her approach and a new tool for her. And then three, this coaching conversation takes place after I have asked Jess to



complete an identity reflection activity. And this is the same activity that I walk you through in the coach Learning Library skill session.

So I may reference that in the episode or just know that it was something she did first. And this is a standard part of my coaching practice since I know that we will be exploring identity throughout our work together. And this is just foundational knowledge to build. Okay. Like most of the role plays on our podcast, we jump into the conversation after the beginning part of a coaching conversation in which we would've had some connection time.

So since you are not going to hear that today, I have created a free resource for you that walks you through how to lead that portion of your conversations. And you'll find a link to that in the show notes. Okay. Let's jump into this conversation.

Elena [Coach]: All right. So Jess, I have a short list of things that we agreed that we would talk about in this session, and but as always, I wanna see if there's anything that's on your mind that you wanna make sure that we explore today or touch on.

Jess [Client]: Yeah. This probably connects to what we're talking about today, but I've been noticing lately a trend in some of my class discussions where I. Specific students, particularly some of my Latino students, are, they're just like not super open to participating. If that's something we can dig into a little bit, I think that that could be helpful. I.

Elena [Coach]: That's great. Yeah. And I do think it connects to the item on our agenda of looking at the last benchmark assessments and disaggregating them according to, some of these different focuses that we've been working on in our schools. So yes, this definitely connects. So let me just ask you first what.

Comes up for you or what it feels like to acknowledge that you're noticing a trend, or you're noticing that one group of students aren't as open to participating.

Jess [Client]: I think on one hand it feels like growth to me to be able to notice something like that. I think in my first couple of years of teaching, I might not have. I thought about it in that way, but then on the other hand, it feels bad to notice that there's like a very specific group of students who maybe don't feel as comfortable in the classroom as others. I don't know if that's exactly the case

Elena [Coach]: mm-hmm. Mm-hmm.

Jess [Client]: Yeah.



Elena [Coach]: Well, I do wanna acknowledge like, yes, it's a reflection of growth, that you're noticing this and naming it, bringing it to me. And also I would say it's a reflection of courage to be able to name this, so what's coming to my mind? I would love to share a reflective tool with you and explore this tool that can be really helpful to understand how our identity influences our work.

It's a tool that's called The Wheel of Privilege and Power, and it helps us consider how various aspects of our identities might shape our interactions with students, you know, even with colleagues. And when we can understand these dynamics better, how our own perspectives are shaped by our experience by identities.

Then we can make more intentional choices about how we teach, how we respond to different students, how we select materials. So I find it's a really empowering tool to reflect on. Does that sound like something you'd be open to exploring?

Jess [Client]: I, yeah, I guess so.

Elena [Coach]: Okay, great. Yeah, I think it could be really helpful to. Help you understand some of the challenges you've been facing. So what I'm gonna do is I am going to share the tool with you, and I'm gonna give you a few minutes to look it over. And take a few minutes to skim through it, and then I'll talk you through it a little bit more.

Okay, so I'm gonna give you just a little orientation to it 'cause I know there's a lot of words there and a lot of shapes so the wheel of power and privilege kind of maps out our identity markers. And so you can see that the closer to the center that you are in a certain category means the more privilege that identity holds, the more unearned social power that identity holds.

And then the farther out you are, the more likely it is that you've experienced marginalization. And see, it might take just one category, and so if you look at the outer circle in that darkest blue, maybe pick one of those categories that we can explore and talk through a little bit more and tell me which category you wanna pick.

Jess [Client]: Okay. Do you want it to be specifically about my students or just in general?

Elena [Coach]: So this is about your identity markers, and so like we could take age



And so you are within the category of 18 to 50. And so the implication here is that grants you proximity to the most power. So the idea here is that those who are farthest from that center, the elderly, and those under 18 experience, the most marginalization.

Right. So like we could just take a very simple, people under the age of 18 can't vote. They are supposed to be under the care or the protection of adults. And so on.

Jess [Client]: Okay.

Elena [Coach]: So you, pick a category now and let's talk through what comes up for you as you reflect on. Your relationship to? To power and privilege.

Jess [Client]: Okay. let's do formal education.

Elena [Coach]: Okay. And so where do you place yourself in those categories?

Jess [Client]: I would postsecondary so I.

Elena [Coach]: I.

Jess [Client]: To most power,

Elena [Coach]: Okay, so when you think about that, what meaning do you make, or what sense do you make of, what does that give you access to in terms of power? What is perhaps possible for you or more possible given your proximity to power through education?

Jess [Client]: um, I probably can get a job. More easily potentially, or there are a lot of jobs that have a criteria that you have to have a college degree. So that would deny access for people in those other two categories.

Elena [Coach]: And most of us exist on multiple places on this wheel. And

So it's likely that there are some places where you hold privilege in one identity, like education, that formal education, and perhaps in another identity you experience marginalization. And this is kind of what we call intersectionality. Like we have these different identities that intersect.

Is there an identity on here that. You would feel comfortable talking about where you feel like, oh, I've experienced less power, or a little bit more marginalization.



Jess [Client]: Yeah, I guess sexuality, I would be in the outermost circle there and then gender identity in the middle.

Elena [Coach]: Okay.

Jess [Client]: Yeah.

Elena [Coach]: And so when you acknowledge those two places on the wheel, then let me just first ask you, is there anything that you're aware of that comes up in terms of any emotions?

Jess [Client]: It's interesting, there's like a mix of like pride in being able to like name who I am and then also some like maybe some shame too, to like to see it kind of like plotted in a specific spot on this wheel where it's like you have the least access to power within like this. Pizza slice.

And it's like a widely accepted concept that that is true.

Elena [Coach]: Yeah. So I hear, I hear some sadness in that also.

That feels accurate. Yeah. So when you take in this. Wheel, this framework, and you take in sort of the totality and the complexity of all these different places that you might be on here. is there anything that surprises you?

Jess [Client]: I don't know if it's necessarily surprising, but I think that sometimes when like the more marginalized part of my identity feels so heavy that like when I'm looking at this and looking at the center where there's most power, I'm like, oh like a lot of these things are also true.

I think balancing those pieces and saying like, oh, I actually like have a lot of power, and sometimes it can feel based on like one or two parts of my identity that I don't,

Elena [Coach]: That's a, that feels like a really important insight. Yeah. Kind of like disproportionality, right? Yeah. So we could definitely dig into all of this so much more, and I really encourage you to keep reflecting on this and just see how you feel like it helps you understand yourself and your experiences.

But I wanna bring us into the classroom and to the dilemma that you brought. Um. Around your Latin students not participating or not seeming open to participate. I'm curious when you look at this framework and you think about this wheel, I'll just start really generally, is there anything that comes up for you?



Any insights you get into this dilemma in your class based on your identity and your student's identities?

Jess [Client]: Yeah, I think there's some like more obvious pieces where there's like racially I have more proximity to power than they do. I think what I'm trying to grapple with is because they are kids and a lot of these slices are things that they don't necessarily have any control over, I guess. And. In some ways, like they're like still in the midst of their education, for example, or like their housing is contingent upon their families.

And so I think I'm trying to balance like the power between, is it like me and the student or is it also like broader than that? Is it bigger than that? Like it's actually like family. Like how do their families play into all of this, I guess is what I'm trying to make sense of too.

Elena [Coach]: Mm-hmm. There's so much to make sense of and there's so much to reflect on and kind of put together. And I hear you're starting to do that. Let's, for right now, let's stay focused on what is most within your sphere of influence, which is in the classroom, and let's think about the relationship between your identity markers and your identity experiences.

And your students and perhaps the other students in your class. And so let's let's for example, look at just the language slice of this pie.

And so as a native English speaker, as a fluent English speaker, you then are closest to the center having most power,

And then you have your Latin students.

Who are non-English and then you also have other students who are also native English speakers. And so I'm curious if you just think about this question or this dilemma of your, your Latin students not seeming to be open to participating as much in discussions. Just think about through this lens I'm curious how that helps you understand this situation.

Jess [Client]: Yeah, having more proximity to the power, like being a native English speaker and other students in the class. Also being native English speakers, are also power dynamics in the classroom, um, that could potentially be contributing to it. And I imagine that learning multiple languages at the same time. Definitely can impact someone's comfort. Like I know that I've tried to learn different languages throughout school and I felt very. Shy about contributing or trying to speak in those languages in those classes because I didn't feel confident.



So it makes sense that they would see that as a barrier to participating.

Elena [Coach]: Hmm. Yeah. I'm thinking about as you were describing that, I was just thinking about sort of the rush of fear that comes up when you're like. I have to speak and I have to, I mean, sometimes I just find speaking publicly in English to be challenging, like

Jess [Client]: same.

Elena [Coach]: So I wonder if we go back to what you brought in that you're noticing this trend that you're feeling like your Latino students aren't open to participating.

I guess the first thing that's coming to my mind is almost like, is there a different way to name the problem? Is there a different way to reframe the problem that gives you more agency as a teacher. Is there a different way to see what's happening?

Jess [Client]: Yeah, I guess instead of saying. My students are not feeling comfortable participating. I could say that I have not yet found the most helpful strategies to build up their confidence to participate in a language that is not their native language.

Elena [Coach]: I have not yet found the most helpful strategies. How does it feel to say that?

Jess [Client]: It feels actionable, which is nice. I think coming into this conversation I was feeling like I just want like, some strategies to try and so stepping back and doing this reflection, I was a little like, I. It didn't feel actionable at first, but I think like getting to this point, I'm like, oh yeah, that's actually something that I can do.

That feels good.

Yeah.

Elena [Coach]: I am curious if this. Observation that I have resonates with you and feel free to tell me like, no, it doesn't. But I feel like what just happened in that really brief exploration of the wheel of power and privilege, I feel like what happened, or what I heard or sensed was your empathy for your Latin students in class discussions.

I'm curious, does that res, does that feel like, yeah, that was.

Jess [Client]: Yeah, for sure. Um, I think having the opportunity to explore some of my own identity, like sexuality for example, and like looking at it this concretely and thinking



about like, oh, when I've been in spaces where feel, I feel the marginalization it's yeah, this makes, it obviously makes sense that. With other identity markers like that, students would feel the same way in the classroom. Yeah.

Elena [Coach]: Yeah.

I am also just wanting to kind of acknowledge or name that we spoke about language, and I think if we looked at some of the other categories, the other identifiers, well, you named like formal education. We talked about age. We could talk about, if we thought about where do you land on the citizenship category or the race category or the wealth category, then it's likely that you are also in categories that are closer to power and that many of your students are farther.

And so I'm just kind of naming that to say. There's a number of ways in which it's possible that your students unconsciously or consciously feel more marginalized. And it's not just language, but it's these other experiences as well.

And so I think you're thinking about, like, I haven't found the most helpful strategies is super actionable and it's really helpful. And then maybe just kind of also holding this bigger picture in mind. Could give you other ideas and other insights about how to understand your students, connect with them, make the classroom safe for them.

Jess [Client]: Yeah, I think sometimes in the day to day we have these expectations of our students that they're going to show up in certain ways because I'm an adult and like I know how want adults to show up and like just kind of stepping back and being like that's not where they're at yet they're still children.

And also there's all of these other. Elements that are impacting how they're able to show up. I think it's like a helpful reminder.

Elena [Coach]: Great. Yeah, and it sounds like a helpful reminder that shifts the problem isn't your students, the problem isn't the children.

Jess [Client]: Right.

Elena [Coach]: There's a bigger context and then as I really heard you take ownership of, I haven't yet found the strategies. And so that's again, that's really courageous.

Jess [Client]: Thanks.



Elena [Coach]: We're gonna stop the role play there and we are going to do our debrief for the coaching Learning Library

Elena: welcome back, friends. I hope that gave you a glimpse into how powerful and how human this kind of conversation can be. So as you think about how you might introduce the wheel of privilege and power to your own clients, remember, start with identity reflection First. Set up the conversation with care and clarity.

Follow your client's pace, curiosity, and emotions. This isn't about checking off a box. This is about creating the conditions for transformation, both for your client and for yourself. So to learn how to use this tool in your coaching to learn how to use it really well, visit the wheel of privilege and power skill session in the coach Learning Library.

And in that skill session, you get the full introduction to the tool. You get downloadable scripts, and you get even more examples of how to facilitate these conversations. And if this episode inspired you, then also consider joining our Coaching for Equity Workshop. This is where we go much deeper into this work and where you will also find a community doing it alongside you.

Thank you for showing up. This work takes courage and I'm grateful to be on the journey with you.

Thanks for watching. If this video sparked something for you, give it a like and share it with a colleague, and I would love to hear your thoughts or questions. And so you can drop those in the comments. And if you want to go deeper, then check out the linked resources below to keep learning. And don't forget that this episode is part of our weekly podcast, so you can subscribe so you don't miss feature episodes.

All right, I'll see you next time,

friends. If you appreciated today's episode, then please share it with someone you know would benefit from it. And or hop over to Apple Podcast and leave us a five star rating and a review to help others discover it. Thank you so much for helping our show. Reach new friends, and if you love the show and want to watch me record every episode, then guess what?

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