

CHARACTERISTICS OF WHITE SUPREMACY CULTURE



Perfectionism

Symptoms:

- A tendency to identify what's wrong, and little ability to identify, name, define, and appreciate what's right.
- Often internally felt. The perfectionist fails to appreciate their own good work, more often pointing out their faults or 'failures.' The person tends to focus on inadequacies and mistakes rather than learning from them, and they work with a harsh and constant inner critic that has internalized the standards set by others.
- Little or no appreciation is expressed among the community for the work that others are doing. When appreciation is expressed, it is often or usually directed to those who get most of the credit anyway. More common is to point out either how the person or work is inadequate, or even more common, to talk to others about the inadequacies of a person or their work without ever talking directly to the person.
- Mistakes are seen as personal. In other words, they reflect badly on the person making them as opposed to being seen for what they are – mistakes.
- Making a mistake is confused with being a mistake. Doing wrong is confused with being wrong.
- The person making the "mistake" or doing something "wrong" rarely participates in defining what doing it "right" looks like or whether a "mistake" actually occurred.
- Little time, energy, or money is put into reflection or identifying lessons learned that can improve practice. There is little or no learning from mistakes, and/or little investigation of what is considered a mistake and why. (Over →)

- Linked to the characteristic of one right way, where the demand for perfection assumes that we know what perfection is while others are doing it wrong or falling short.

Antidotes:

- Develop a culture of appreciation. Take time to make sure that everyone's work and efforts are appreciated.
- Develop a learning community or organization, where the stated expectation is that everyone will make mistakes and that those mistakes offer opportunities for learning.
- Create a culture of support that recognizes how mistakes sometimes lead to positive results.
- Create a culture of inquiry about what constitutes the "right way" and what defines a "mistake."
- Build in an understanding that every approach yields unintended consequences and even the most strategically made decisions will have unanticipated consequences.
- Separate the person from the mistake.
- When offering feedback, always speak to what went well before offering critical feedback.
- When a mistake is jointly or collectively acknowledged, ask for specific suggestions about what the person or group has learned and how they would do things differently moving forward.
- Realize that being your own worst critic does not actually improve the work. Instead, it often contributes to low morale among the group, and it does not help you or the group realize the benefit of learning from mistakes. If you are constantly criticizing yourself in your relationships with others, you focus the attention on you, on support for you, rather than on the issue at hand.