

## Overview:

This activity is based on a video of a TEDx Talk by Jay Smooth. The activity has two parts. The first, which explores ideas presented by Smooth, can be done independently of the second. The second asks participants to consider contextual elements of the video to explore their own thoughts and feelings. Facilitators need to consider in advance whether the group operates with enough psychological safety and openness to engage productively with the second part.

## Objectives:

As a result of this activity, participants will be able to:

1. Explain why people may find it hard to discuss race.
2. Identify daily practices that may reduce prejudiced thought and action.
3. (If participants engage in second part of activity) Explore their own responses to specific social identifications.

**Time:** 60 minutes (Part I: 30 minutes)

## Group Size:

Entire group and small groups

## Materials:

Computer or tablet and Internet connection to watch or listen to *TEDx Talks. (2011, Nov. 15). TEDxHampshireCollege - Jay Smooth - how I learned to stop worrying and love discussing race* [Video]. YouTube. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MbdxeFcQtaU> (12 minutes). Facilitator may wish to ask participants to watch video in advance.

## Intercultural Development Continuum Stages:

- Minimization
- Acceptance

## AAC&U Intercultural Knowledge and Competence Goals:

Cultural Self-Awareness:

- To articulate insights into own cultural rules and biases (e.g., seeking complexity; aware of how their experiences have shaped these rules, and how to recognize and respond to cultural biases, resulting in a shift in self-description).

Openness:

- To initiate and develop interactions with culturally different others.
- To suspend judgment in valuing interactions with culturally different others.

## Part I Activity Instructions (30 minutes):

1. Ask participants:

- Have you ever been "called out" for something you said or wrote that offended someone? How did you respond? Why do you think you responded that way?
  - How easy is it for you to talk about race? Why do you think that is?
2. Watch/listen to the video together.
  3. Ask:
    - How did you feel as you watched/listened to this video?
    - How do you understand the analogy to dental hygiene? What are some ways in which prejudice builds up daily? What are some measures to do daily hygiene to prevent build-up?
    - Smooth states, "It is the connections we maintain with our imperfections that allows us to be good." How do you interpret this statement?
    - Based on the video or your own ideas, why is it important to talk about race?
    - What are your takeaways from the TEDx Talk or this discussion?

## **Part II Activity Instructions (30 minutes):**

1. Hand out Participant Instructions and go over them with participants.
2. Divide large group into small groups of 3-4 participants. Give groups 15 minutes to discuss, using Participant Instructions.
3. Bring all groups back to from a large group. Remind participants to focus on their own learning and not share what someone in their group said.
4. Ask:
  - What did you learn about what may affect responses to this video?
  - (If discussion hasn't addressed these issues, you may want to raise some of the following questions) Do you think your response and the conversation might have been different if...
    - Smooth's skin were very dark? (reference to colorism)
    - Smooth had spoken African American English? (reference to linguistic bias)
    - Smooth had been a woman? (reference to sexism)
    - Smooth's talk had been recorded in an empty urban lot with trash in it? (reference to educational elitism, anti-urban bias)?
    - Smooth had spoken in a sharp tone and hadn't left time for the audience to laugh? (reference to white fragility)
  - How will you apply what you learned to your daily life?

## **Related Tools:**

- [Check Your Bias Blind Spot](#)



- [How Advertising Perpetuates Stereotypes](#)
- [How Easy Is My Daily Life \(Lego Privilege Activity\)](#)
- [Subtle Prejudice Activity](#)

## Participant Instructions

The small group discussion involves sharing responses to Jay Smooth's TEDx Talk and analyzing the video critically to explore possible connections between various responses and the unconscious thought processes that he mentions.

1. Do a round robin in which you each share your initial response – thoughts and feelings – as you watched the video. Keep in mind that all responses are valid.
2. Discuss what might have contributed to your initial response beyond Smooth's words. For example, you might discuss characteristics of Jay Smooth, how he spoke, the context of the talk, how the audience's response was shown on the video, aspects of the collective watching/listening experience for your group, your own experiences with race and being raced, etc.
3. Imagine how changing one aspect that you discussed might lead to a different response. For example, what might your response have been if Jay Smooth spoke African American English? If he hadn't used humor and left time for the audience to laugh? If the setting hadn't been a college auditorium?