

Task One: How am I different?

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I never think of myself as 'different'. I can see that I am different, such as, I'm a woman, I'm caucasian, I'm married, I've had twins and so forth. Whereas others are the opposite of how define myself. If I think back at specific experiences throughout my life I have felt different. I have been judged by those differences. But, today or even in the past school year I have not been secluded because of any differences.

But to be brutally honest I have had 30+ years in training myself to conform or follow the crowd. I am very uncomfortable being put on the spot, being given public praise or criticism. I learned very early to blend. Don't get me wrong I do express my opinion often and often put my 'foot in my mouth'. It is through most of these 'foot in the mouth' experiences that I've learned to stop expressing such opinions and to utilize more tact.

The differences I can relate to are the philosophical ones, values, beliefs, and agendas. I often debate colleagues on teaching methods and styles, political agendas in schools, collaboration expectations, and /or overall teaching frustrations, to name a few. Sometimes my facts and opinions make the room very quiet. When the room gets quiet I know I've said something the masses do not agree with or do not care to discuss. Usually when that happens I reflect on what I said and try to make any slighted person feel better by backpedaling. I probably shouldn't, but I don't want to rock the boat (HA!). Really, I don't want to make a hostile working environment for myself. So... self preservation?

The issue I am dealing with currently, or the difference I am encountering is personal agendas. The LSC of my school has decided to not renew our current principals contract, therefore we as a staff are in a bit of a limbo period. It has been very uncomfortable for everyone and there has been some serious divides or rather circling of the wagons. Again, self preservation! Most divides have been from personal agendas. Chicago Public Schools is not the most relaxing business to work for and no one feels their position is stable. Many current employees have been dismissed from previous schools for ridiculous or unreasonable causes. Myself included, I was placed by my principal in a math position for seven years and then fired because I was not algebra certified the second they wanted me to be due to me giving birth to twins. There's some differences for you! I digress. Personal agendas have been dividing our staff for this current school year because everyone knows a new person will come in and probably shake things up so everyone is in self preservation mode. I find this situation utterly frightening and preposterous at the same time. I do express conflicting opinions and do to the limbo state I have found myself feeling shut out of conversations because of others personal agendas not fitting my own philosophy.

Answering the 'ways you're different' question takes a lot of reflecting and self admission of rightdoing AND wrongdoing, which is hard! I do not like admitting anything out loud. Remember, self preservation.