What is the 21 Day DVAM Challenge?

This challenge asks participants to dedicate time each day to foster a deeper understanding of social justice – especially how issues of white supremacy and racism compound and complicate the trauma of domestic violence. Every weekday participants will receive an email with various learning challenges such as podcasts, videos, and articles that examine the intersections of white supremacy, racism, and domestic and sexual violence.

Through this challenge, participants will explore topics such as white supremacy, criminalization of survival, barriers to accessing services, and transformative justice. By learning about these topics, participants will develop a deeper understanding of the barriers that survivors of color face in seeking assistance. Participants will leave this challenge with tools and skills to better support survivors of color, through strategies that were developed and fostered by people of color (especially women of color).

What is White Supremacy?

In this challenge, we frequently use the words “white supremacy.” Currently, this word has largely been utilized to describe hate groups, such as the Ku Klux Klan. However, white supremacy goes behind acts of hatred. To put it simply, white supremacy is a system of exploitation and oppression of peoples of color that affects every aspect of life. When we frame racial justice around the issue of white supremacy, we recognize that individual racist actions are the result of and exist in a larger system of oppression.

Sources:
Martinez, Elizabeth ‘Betita’. (1998) What is white supremacy?
Why should we do the challenge at my organization?
By doing this challenge, we believe that your organization will begin or continue the process of building an inclusive, survivor-centered culture. This challenge will provide your organization the time and space to build transformative habits, to foster a sense of teamwork and community, and to engage in purposeful conversations around white supremacy and violence.

Tips for doing the challenge in a group
Take the time to introduce the challenge to your organization/team and explain the purpose for doing it in your organization. Encourage people to use the reflection log provided. Teams can meet weekly to discuss their reflections on the Challenge.

Questions to explore as a group
- How did the challenges this week affect you?
- What have you learned from the challenge this week?
- How does this relate to any theories, models, and/or other concepts you know?
- How has this experience changed your thinking?
- What would it take to apply what you learned?
- What action would you like to take?
- What further resources or education would you like to have or explore?

Adapted from the ORID Focused Conversation Method, based on the original work of Laura Spencer.

Set group agreements
Before diving into discussion, take the time to establish group agreements. “Group agreements” allow the group to agree on how they want to engage while in the space and establish collective expectations for behavior. Here are some examples of group agreements that we frequently use:
- Be present
- “I” Statements – Only speak from your experiences and not on behalf of a “group”
- Lean into discomfort
- Share the airtime. Step up, Step back

For more in-depth resources, check out the Anti-Oppressive Facilitation For Democratic Process handbook By Aorta.

Intersectionality: Survivors can be anyone
In 1989, black feminist scholar Kimberlé Crenshaw coined the term “intersectionality” to explore how both sexism and racism compounded oppression for women of color. Today, the term has expanded to explain how certain identities (race, class, education, gender, sexuality, ability, etc) you hold impact the way you are viewed, understood, and treated.

Though this challenge explores the intersections of white supremacy and domestic violence, many resources explore the other forms of oppression and discrimination that affect people in our community, including survivors of color.

However, some resources use gendered language to talk about survivors (“women”). We recognize that interpersonal violence affects many people, not just women. The intersections of various identities can have both negative and positive impacts for survivors seeking assistance and care in a time of need.

Adapted from the YWCA of Greater Cleveland’s 21-Day Challenge Toolkit