



## Boulders that Get in the Way of Antiracism

Awareness is a critical component of antiracism. If we become aware of our words, actions, and behaviors then we can adjust them which might include learning new behaviors and or unlearning old ones.

While we are striving to show up with compassion when creating an antiracist culture, old patterns might show up. These old patterns might act as boulders that get in the way of showing up with compassion. Listed below are some of the boulders that might get in the way of showing up with compassion, what each boulder might sound or look like, and tips for chipping away at each boulder.

BOULDER	WHAT IT MIGHT SOUND OR LOOK LIKE	TIPS FOR CHIPPING AWAY AT THE BOULDER
Defensiveness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Responding to criticism (i.e. being called-in) with defensiveness</li><li>• Raising awareness of inequities is viewed as a threat</li><li>• Responding to discussions about inequities by listing personal merits - all of the things that you are already doing in this work</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Name defensiveness as a problem when it shows up</li><li>• Reflect on the relationship between defensiveness and fear</li><li>• Ask yourself "<i>What am I getting defensive about?</i>" or "<i>What am I trying to defend?</i>"</li></ul>
Checkbox Oriented	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Worship of an agenda or checklist</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Recognize moments when you need to go off of an agenda</li></ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Showing greater concern for the number of tasks completed versus the quality of tasks completed</li> <li>• Prioritizing things that can be measured over things that cannot</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use a protocol during difficult moments to normalize the act of pausing when critical moments occur</li> </ul>
Deflection	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Deviating away from the purpose of a discussion about inequities because it is too uncomfortable</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Restate the purpose of a discussion</li> <li>• Recognize moments when you are deflecting then pause to ask "<i>Why am I deflecting?</i>"</li> </ul>
Either/ Or Thinking	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Proving wokeness (or commitment to DEI) because if "<i>I'm not woke, I'm racist</i>"</li> <li>• Implying that a high performing organization can't have equity issues Sounds like "<i>I can't be racist/prejudice because I am [Insert marginalized identity]</i>"</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Explore how things can be both/and</li> <li>• Explore multiple truths</li> <li>• Notice when you're using either/or thinking and push yourself to entertain other possibilities</li> <li>• Let people know -- and modeling -- that we are all at different places on the continuum at different moments and that's part of it; there is no such thing as being "right" all the time</li> <li>• Understand that we live in a racist society and racist norms and ideas have infiltrated all of our worldviews whether we recognize this or not</li> </ul>
Fear of Open Conflict	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• People in power (i.e. adults in managers, leaders) avoiding or punishing expressed conflict</li> <li>• When someone raises an issue, the person who raised the issue is</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Form and norm as a group</li> <li>• Create opportunities for group members to build meaningful relationships with others</li> <li>• Name without judgement and help the group to explore conflict via a safe dialogue structure</li> </ul>

	<p>criticized rather than the issue itself</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Emphasizing on the need to be polite when discussing inequities</li> <li>• Sharing very surface level responses to questions regarding inequities</li> <li>• Avoiding the elephant in the room or obvious but unspoken points of tension</li> <li>• Allowing someone to make problematic statements to avoid an uncomfortable conversation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop an appreciation for healthy conflict and understand the important role of open conflict in advancing equity</li> </ul>
Objectivity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Phrases like <i>"I don't see color"</i></li> <li>• Invalidating someone for getting emotional</li> <li>• The bootstrap mentality - or the idea that one can lift themselves out of circumstances related to systemic oppression (i.e. poverty)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Incorporate implicit/explicit bias training</li> <li>• Name that we all have biases</li> <li>• Sit in discomfort if someone expresses themselves in a way that is different than you</li> </ul>
One-directional Teaching	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Believing those with power (i.e., managers, leaders) educate those with less power (i.e., direct reports), not the other way around</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Distinguish between the conventional teacher-as-expert role and the roles played in this work</li> <li>• Appreciate others for their unique gifts</li> <li>• Asset-based mindset - recognizing what others can do as opposed to what they cannot do</li> <li>• Recognize that there is something to learn from everyone</li> </ul>

<b>Right to Comfort</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Believing or behaving as though those with power (i.e. manager, leaders) have a right to emotional and psychological comfort</li> <li>• Declaring that 'there's been a lot of progress here' and/or '<i>it's better here than other places</i>'</li> <li>• Looking for validation as an ally before engaging in difficult discussions</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identify needed areas of improvement</li> <li>• Educate folks of the assumption of a right to comfort as a privilege</li> <li>• Understand the important role of discomfort in growing and learning</li> </ul>
<b>Resistance to Change</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Non-participatory</li> <li>• Being on screen but doing other things (not giving one's full attention)</li> <li>• Leaning towards doing things the way they've always been done</li> <li>• Refusing to believe that current systems in place can be harmful</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Vision-cast as a way to paint a community that is more appealing than the one that you're in</li> </ul>
<b>Virtuous Victim Narrative</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Glorifying the onus on BIPOC colleagues and their leadership in guiding this work</li> <li>• Offering that will only listen to BIPOC colleagues if and when they share their challenges in a 'productive' or 'respectful' way</li> <li>• Model-minority stereotypes</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• When called-in or receiving criticism focus on what is being said not how it is said</li> <li>• Allow those who are directly impacted to lead</li> </ul>
<b>Fear of Failure</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Not speaking into the group</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Saying aloud that we are taking a risk and asking for patience/grace</li> <li>• Model risk-taking via vulnerability</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Seeking group or individual consensus when offering something</li> <li>• Placing more concern in the possibility of being called racist rather than the possibility of actually being racist</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ask "<i>What's holding you back from saying what's on your heart?</i>" as a way to call people in to think about and name what their own boulders are. Pursue people, with love.</li> <li>• Insert yourself into uncomfortable spaces -- based on our own inward looking. Help them to know that they matter -- and know for yourself that if you hold back, then others may never see what you have to offer.</li> <li>• Build the courage to challenge and create new conversations that otherwise won't happen</li> </ul>
<b>Power Dynamics</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Leveraging power and distancing through positionality</li> <li>• Non-participatory unless in charge or at the center</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Normalize the practice of naming who you are outside of work -- showing more humanity</li> <li>• Build an openness to learning</li> <li>• Develop an understanding for the different ways that power and influence show up, beyond institutionalized power and influence</li> </ul>
<b>Denial</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Phrases like "<i>I didn't experience that and I was there</i>"</li> <li>• Inability to accept duality of perceptions</li> <li>• Leaning into personal identities to avoid accountability for action or divert attention from topic(s) at hand</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Be open to the fact that the individual's reality is real for them and therefore should be heard</li> </ul>