

STATUS POWER DIFFERENCES

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We are all equal as human beings, we all have personal power, and all deserve to be treated with dignity. Status Power Differentials come with a culturally-assigned difference in power, influence, systemic impacts and responsibilities. The impacts that accompany a status power difference need to be understood and accounted for in every relationship. Note that these dynamics also apply in collective and systemic power.

Person with UP-STATUS Power	Person with DOWN-STATUS Power
Has increased status power and influence due to historic and systemic context and conditions. May be more vulnerable to experiencing guilt, shame, avoidance, defensiveness, and fragility than their down-power colleagues.	Has decreased status power and influence due to historic and systemic context and conditions. May be more vulnerable to being rejected, exploited, shamed, abused, oppressed, disrespected and manipulated than up-status power colleagues.
Is ultimately responsible for recognizing unearned power and repairing harm caused by their demographic group. Can use their up-status power to intervene in situations to unburden those with down-status power.	Is responsible for recognizing their personal power, particularly earned by navigating their down-status power. May choose to use their personal power to support themselves or others with down-status power.
May mistake status power for personal power (Internalized Superiority)	May mistake status power with personal power (Internalized Oppression)
May not recognize the difference between intention and impact. (May try to “help” in ways that are actually damaging.)	May have unrealistic expectations of the up-status person.
May transfer feelings or relationships from the past onto the person with down-status power.	May transfer feelings or relationships from the past onto the person with up-status power.
Must consistently demonstrate trustworthiness and earn trust.	May either assume or test for trustworthiness.
Up-status is often associated with positive stereotypes. If someone from an up-status group engages in negative behavior, it is not often generalized to their entire demographic group.	Down-status may be associated with negative stereotypes and/or tokenization and exotification. If someone with down-status engages in negative behavior, it is often generalized to their entire demographic group.
Structural differences result in people with up-status receiving unearned benefits and greater deference.	Structural differences may result in lower pay, less recognition, and less respect for people with down-status power.
Can set and maintain cultural norms. May have difficulty recognizing appropriate cultural boundaries or seeing the advantages of diverse methods of engagement.	Conforms to or challenges cultural norms as circumstances dictate. This often creates a double-bind for those with down-status.

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May have the status-related desire to be liked, respected or validated by those with down-status power. Has the responsibility to learn about the general impacts of this need from other people with up-status (NOT from those with down-status power).	May have the status-related need or desire to be liked, respected and/or included. May be induced to care-take those with up-status power. This results in emotional labor for the down-status person.
Has greater influence through their words and actions. Their criticism or disrespect has more weight because of their up-status.	Can be strongly influenced by the words and actions of up-power persons. This influence can affect their dignity and self-worth.
Is 100% responsible for bringing their personal power to the relationship, but they are also 150% responsible for tending to the health of the relationship. Is responsible for initiating the work of resolving problems and conflicts. <i>(Refers to the "150% principle")</i>	Is 100% responsible for bringing their personal power to the relationship (based on their capacity and the health of the relationship). May choose to engage in resolving problems and conflicts where investment in the relationship is appropriate.
May be easily idealized and/or devalued by those with down-status power.	May idealize, devalue, and/or have unrealistic expectations of the persons or groups with up-status power.
May escalate conflict when receiving feedback when there is mis-alignment of intention and impact.	May escalate conflict when they don't feel heard or responded to or may withdraw and internalize their concerns.
Has a responsibility to seek feedback from those with down-status power in order to assess impact and to create relationships that are empowering, collaborative, and equitable.	May unnecessarily disempower themselves (not utilize personal power) and can become fatigued, apathetic, unmotivated, and/or disengaged.
Is responsible for ongoing education regarding status power differentials.	May need to assist persons in up-power roles to use their power more wisely or skillfully by using down-power influence (where appropriate). Sometimes has the power to disengage from relationship if it is not working well and can't be changed.
May confuse the interpersonal aspects and structural influences in the relationship, and is still 150% responsible for the impact of their participation in these two aspects.	May confuse the interpersonal aspects and structural influences in the relationship.
May not acknowledge their status power or feel powerful.	May not acknowledge their personal power or feel powerless.
May be affected or driven by shadow aspects of power and by faulty justifications for oppressive behavior.	May not know what kinds of behavior are related to systems of oppression. May know more about the dominant groups' behavior than those with up-status power due to heightened awareness.