

what is power sharing?

power-sharing is the practice of distributing power, decision-making authority, and resources among multiple persons or groups, rather than concentrating them in the hands of just one person or a small elite.

in a power-sharing environment, people collaborate, help each other, and work together to make decisions, rather than compete or try to outdo one another. the goal is to create a space where all voices are heard and respected, particularly when it comes to differences in race, gender, sexual orientation, or other identities.

in a real power-sharing process, everyone understands how decisions are made, how they can participate, and how their contributions are valued. however, it's important to recognize that power-sharing, in practice, can be more complex than it might initially appear, especially when considering how existing **inequalities** and **privileges** shape the dynamics of decision-making.

links between power-sharing and horizontal structures

a horizontal structure is one where there are few or no hierarchical levels, meaning that everyone has an equal stake in decision-making. power-sharing is directly linked to horizontal structures because both aim to flatten traditional power dynamics, moving away from hierarchical systems where decision-making authority is concentrated at the top.

in hierarchical structures, those at the top often have disproportionate power, which can lead to inequality and exclusion. horizontal structures, on the other hand, prioritize collective decision-making, ensuring that power is more equally distributed. when power is shared in this way, individuals are encouraged to collaborate as equals, creating a sense of shared responsibility and collective ownership of outcomes.

however, we argue that simply having a horizontal structure doesn't automatically guarantee true equity. even in horizontal structures, dominant power dynamics, such as race, class, gender can still shape who gets heard and whose voices are valued.

power-sharing is most effective when it also takes into account these deeper, structural inequalities.

tips for sharing power when you haven't done it before

if you're new to sharing power and are rethinking your approach, it can feel intimidating. the process might seem like an idealistic goal, but with practical steps, it can become a transformative practice. here are some tips to help you get started:

- **start small:** begin by making space for others to share their ideas. if you are in a group, invite others to speak first, and listen actively without interrupting. acknowledge that listening is an important part of sharing power, as it can help challenge assumptions and open up more inclusive spaces
- **check your own privilege:** reflect on your position within the group or society. recognize where you hold power, why, and how that impacts others. this awareness is crucial in ensuring that power is shared fairly, rather than perpetuating existing hierarchies. we believe that recognizing intersectionality - the ways race, class, gender, and other identities intersect - is key in understanding who holds power and why
- **be transparent:** if you are in a position of power, be clear about your intentions to share it. transparency helps build trust and reduces resistance
- **focus on collective well-being:** the goal of power-sharing is to create a more just and inclusive environment. think about how your actions and decisions can benefit everyone in the group, particularly those who have historically been excluded or marginalized
- **embrace the process of learning from others:** let go of the need to always be in control or at the center. true power-sharing requires a shift away from individualistic, competitive approaches
- **create systems of feedback:** make space for persons to voice their concerns and ideas about how power is shared. power-sharing is not a one-time event, but a continuous process that should evolve over time. be willing to adjust and improve the process based on the feedback you receive, ensuring that everyone feels their voice is heard and respected.

the reality of sharing power

sharing power is not just an ideal or a "nice-to-have" concept; it is about creating an environment where everyone feels safe, respected, and empowered. it's about actively working to dismantle inequalities that often go unchallenged. for this to be effective, however, power-sharing must go beyond token gestures and truly engage with the

complexities of power - acknowledging historical and ongoing oppression, while creating spaces where everyone has an equal opportunity to contribute.

we believe at its core, power-sharing is about recognizing that everyone's perspective matters, and that the best decisions come from collaborative, inclusive processes that challenge existing systems of dominance and create opportunities for collective growth.

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