



## Curated White Racial Discomfort

Discomfort, distress, guilt, confusion, and cognitive dissonance are critically important for White educators to experience if we expect their engagement in school-based racial equity improvement work. Curated white racial discomfort refers to racially discomfoting learning experiences that are continuous, thoughtfully planned and designed to transform White educators' personal and collective understandings of race and racism.

To achieve educational equity, school communities must create professional learning opportunities that make white people uncomfortable with racism and their roles in reproducing it.

When I first started working with educators, I was a firm believer in the idea that establishing psychological safety was foundational to improvement. I still believe it's important. But I also understand it's overemphasized as a precondition to change. Fear, worry, and discomfort can make people seek improvement too. So I suggest creating learning that is "dangerously safe."

Think about it this way. If you aspire to be a world-renowned gymnast who masters the balance beam, you will have to do the dangerous work of doing your best tricks on a high bar.

1. Young gymnasts start on a low beam
2. As their confidence grows, they don't only do more complex moves, they do it on a higher beam.
3. There is an ever present risk of falling.
4. The higher the beam, the farther the fall. The greater the potential injury.
5. But there are also safeguards in place. Coaches, floor padding, and harnesses that support these athletes as they take risks on their journey to be champions.
6. But in the moments of real competition, the danger is great - everyone is looking. There's no spotters.



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### CHAPTER 2

The danger of racial equity work is that it raises the bar. There's no other way to be the best. Falls are inevitable. The risk of injury increases the higher you go. Unfortunately, many White educators maintain a low bar of practice when it comes to Black and Brown students, who need and deserve educators who are willing to raise the racial equity bar. People who aspire to be champions for them - including facing the risks that being a champion for racial equity entails.

When it comes to school-based racism, White educators' psychological and emotional well-being is too often upheld at the expense of Black and Brown students' well-being. Therefore, White educators must experience racial discomfort as a part of their continued learning. Black and Brown students benefit from it.



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