

What are Social Graces?

The 'Social Graces' act as a framework enabling thought and discussion around identity and power dynamics. They are a way of applying knowledge surrounding equality and diversity into day-to-day practice.

Social Graces facilitate better understanding and awareness of how certain characteristics we identify with may afford us, or disable us from, different privileges and positions of power. By opening conversations and making space to explore the effects of power differentials, the Social Graces enable us to begin addressing them.

The Acronym – what does it stand for?

The Social Graces mnemonic identifies 15 different aspects that a person may identify with in different ways. These aspects play a significant role in an individual's identity and how they perceive themselves and/or are perceived by others:

G – Gender/Gender Identity, Geography

R – Race, Religion

A – Age, Ability, Appearance

C – Class, Culture

E – Ethnicity, Education, Economics

S – Sexuality, Sexual Orientation, Spirituality

Social Graces challenge the idea of a 'fixed' identity or personality. They are fluid and may differ depending on time, place and culture so it is useful to note that the above is not an exhaustive list.



One Minute Guide

Social Graces

Visible/Invisible & Voiced/Unvoiced

Social Graces may be visible and invisible, voiced and unvoiced.

Visible Graces are aspects of identity that are easily noticeable or apparent to others, whereas invisible Graces are often not immediately obvious to others unless they are explicitly told.

Voiced and unvoiced Graces tend to encompass aspects of people's identity or experiences that are actively discussed or remain hidden/unspoken about.

Why Social Graces?

Social Graces enable practitioners to reflect on how their own identities and those of service users may influence their interactions and relationships.

By recognising these factors, practitioners are better equipped to understand power imbalances in their relationships with children and families.

Understanding and identifying these power imbalances enables professionals to work towards more equitable and effective practice.

Cultural Competence & Curiosity:

Cultural competence represents an ability to understand, recognise and interact with people from diverse backgrounds, cultures and belief systems.

Implementing the Social Graces in everyday practice facilitates culturally competent service provision and communication, which can help break down barriers to engagement and improve service user experiences.

How can I use Social Graces?

The Social Graces can be a valuable tool in safeguarding. They can support practitioners to identify individuals who may be vulnerable or more susceptible to abuse and/or exploitation due to certain identity factors that influence their lived experience.

Independent reflection:

The Social Graces can be used as a self-reflective tool among practitioners, helping to explore how their identities and experiences shape their interactions with children and families. Identifying and acknowledging biases through the use of the Social Graces model enables practitioners to begin mitigating the impacts of their own assumptions and prejudices.

Social Graces in a group setting:

Similarly, the Social Graces can be used in group work and team discussions to explore unconscious biases or blind spots within teams and wider settings, such as across organisations. It can be useful to combine the Social Graces framework with reflection and discussion around culturally competent practice and service provision.

Social Graces & Children and Families:

Social Graces can also be used with children and families directly, guided practitioners. Introducing individuals and their families to the Social Graces diagram and encouraging them to explore which Graces they identify with will support practitioners to gain a holistic understanding of the child and family's identity and cultural background.

Top Tips

The Social Graces do not need to represent fixed categories, but they can be a useful starting point for professional curiosity and open dialogue.

It can be useful to use the Social Graces alongside other equality, diversity and inclusion tools to gain a holistic understanding of unconscious biases that could impact service provision:

The Privilege Wheel – a visual framework that sets out the Social Graces and other characteristics/aspects of identity. The illustration shows how social identities intersect with each other and with power systems to afford varying levels of privilege, influence and marginalisation.

The Privilege Walk – a valuable resource for fostering empathy and inclusivity. The group activity encourages reflection around privilege and its impact on interactions with others, including colleagues and service users.

Not sure where to start? Try these reflection questions:

1. Which elements of your own Social Graces do you most identify with?
2. In which areas do you feel you experience privilege?
3. Which aspects of difference have been a cause of discrimination/disadvantage for you?
4. Which of the Social Graces are you most comfortable or uncomfortable sharing/discussing/asking about with others?

Key Contacts and Further Information

- [Coventry Safeguarding Adult Board](#)
- [Coventry Safeguarding Children Partnership – Coventry City Council](#)
- [Heartbreaking Moment When Kids Learn About White Privilege | The School That Tried to End Racism](#)
- [Academic wheel of privilege - UK Research Integrity Office](#)