

# The 4As: How to Develop a Liberatory Consciousness

## Awareness



Awareness requires that we recognize that we live in an oppressive society, and an oppressive society enables racial, social, economic, and health inequities to persist, despite their negative impacts on individuals, families and communities. Living in awareness requires that we pay attention to our behaviors or non-behaviors, language, and thoughts, and these aspects of others to determine how what is happening may be contributing to systems of oppression. Awareness requires that you ask yourself:

- What behaviors do I engage in that contribute to an oppressive society?
- How is what is happening in society contributing to the oppression of individuals, families, groups, or communities?

## Analysis

After one has become aware of what is happening that is contributing to an oppressive society, one needs to analyze why this is happening. Analysis requires that you develop explanations, theories, or hypotheses about why what you observed is happening. Analysis also requires you to think about what you could possibly do to address what is happening in society. You want to analyze the situation with an eye towards a possible solution that promotes equity and justice, ensuring that what you are proposing is consistent with social work values. Analysis requires that you ask yourself:

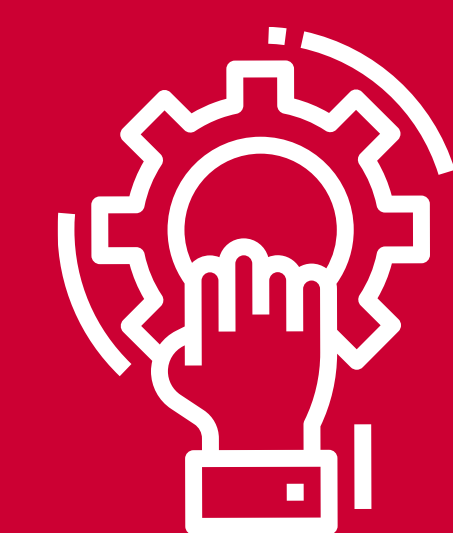
- Why is this issue occurring in society?
- What solutions can I propose to address what I have observed happening in society that promote equity and justice?



## Action

Awareness and analysis are not enough. We must take action to promote equity and justice. This action can be on an individual level or may involve others. Action can be in the form of advocacy, finding resources, or empowering others to take action. Action requires that you ask yourself:

- How can I advocate for the resources to help marginalized communities?
- What organizations do I belong to and how can I encourage the members to make a difference?



## Accountability & Allyship

Accountability/Ally-ship aids in the progress of making substantive change, as it allows one to collaborate to address what is contributing to an oppressive society. Accountability/Ally-ship requires that you see those whom you are collaborating with as experts and be willing to learn from them. To be accountable or an ally you need to ask yourself:

- How do I show up when I want to be an ally?
- What communities do I want to be an ally and am I willing to let those in that community educate me on what they are experiencing?



Learn about developing a liberatory consciousness framework:  
[go.rutgers.edu/liberatoryconsciousness](https://go.rutgers.edu/liberatoryconsciousness)