

# UNDERSTANDING POWER, RANK & PRIVILEGE

**A three-part ANZPOP mini-course for better  
collegial, client and personal relationships**

*More insight*

*Less drama*

*Better connections*

## MODULE 3

How to develop *rank fluidity*

How to learn more about power, rank and privilege



# DEVELOPING RANK FLUIDITY

Sometimes when we embark on *working on our rank*, we aim to just build more high rank (usually an attempt to escape the pain of old low rank experiences and feelings).

Paradoxically, the more useful goal is to develop *rank fluidity*.

Rank fluidity is about being able to move between high and low rank states/experiences relatively easily.

It's about finding value in both and being curious about both.

Without rank fluidity, our lives are controlled by our dependence on high or low rank states to protect us from pain or discomfort.

Rank fluidity means we can take care of ourselves when we are in low rank situations, and perhaps even facilitate others from a position of low rank.



## BEFRIENDING HIGH RANK

While everyone is different, often the first step in developing rank fluidity is to *celebrate our high rank(s)*.

This means becoming aware of and grateful for our high rank(s), as opposed to denying them or feeling guilty for having them.

**It's hard to make good use of our privileges if we can't acknowledge them.**

Use the exercise on the next page to learn to celebrate high rank(s).



# MODULE 3 EXERCISE 1

## CELEBRATING YOUR HIGH RANKS

1. Pick an area where you have high rank, that perhaps you are not yet comfortable with yet.
2. Think about why it is an area of high rank, and the privileges you get from this rank. Really celebrate your luck! How does it make your life easier than others without that rank? What opportunities does it give you that others might not have? What pain do these privileges spare you from? How does it make life more relaxing or meaningful? Write these down.
3. Now take a moment to close your eyes and bring your awareness into your body. What happens in your body when you really let yourself feel the benefits of these privileges? Let the joy of your good fortune fill your body and notice what it feels like to have such privileges. What happens to your posture, your inner atmosphere? Maybe there is a particular place in your body you feel it, maybe you see something or someone, or a song might pop into your head.
4. When you're ready, note down this experience.



5. Now think about the ways you are using this privilege already: at home, work, socially, at the shops? Write them down.
6. Are there people you know who don't have this privilege? Can you share or use this privilege to make others feel proud of their privileges? Or to bring up issues and prejudices?
7. How could using this privilege change your relationships; your community; our world!?
8. How could you share this privilege?

This isn't a one-time exercise - repeat it, picking a new high rank each time.

*Note that if you have a particularly complicated or painful history relative to the abuse of power, you may not be able to do this exercise on your own yet. You might do it in a therapeutic relationship or wait until the time is right to do it alone.*



# BEFRIENDING LOW RANK

The nature and extent of low rank experiences in our past will significantly impact how and when we can work on befriending low rank experiences.

For those of us who've experienced interpersonal trauma, it might take years of therapy work to build the capacity for feeling high rank before we can explore the value of low rank capacities.

Being in low rank often means we are pushed to develop our social skills. Our relationships with others enable us to get our needs met when we don't have the resources at hand to meet our needs ourselves.

These experiences teach us how to be vulnerable, how to ask for help, how to attune to other's moods, empathy, cooperation, and compromise.

Low rank positions also often have more freedom than a high rank role. For example, students have more freedom to get things wrong than teachers.

Use the following exercise to explore what you've learnt from low rank experiences.



# MODULE 3 EXERCISE 2

## LEARNING FROM LOW RANK

1. Pick a recent low rank experience to work with – not the toughest one, start with an easy one.
2. Find a spot in the room to *put* the experience. That is, imagine the experience unfolding in another part of the room to where you are standing. In your imagination, observe the experience from a distance.
3. Notice how you handled the experience. What skills did you draw on to deal with and move through it? Where did you develop those skills?
4. Now reflect on what that experience taught you? What new skills or insight did you develop as a result of the experience?
5. Think about how these new skills and insight now add to your psychological rank. Where could you use these skills more?



## HOW TO LEARN MORE

If you've got to this point and you don't want the journey to end – great stuff!!

Learning about power, rank and privilege isn't a one-off lesson, it's a lifelong learning topic because it's ever present and ever changing throughout our lives.

There are plenty of ways to further your journey with power:

1. You can read more (we recommend **Power: A Users Guide** by Julie Diamond and **Sitting in the Fire: Large Group Transformation Through Diversity and Conflict** by Arnold Mindell).
2. You can use a reflective practice to think about your day, your interactions, through the lens of rank and power.
3. You can also work on it one-on-one with a [Process Work therapist or coach](#).
4. Or [come study with us!](#) This model of power, rank and privilege informs all our courses.

