

FEAR-AGENCY-ACTION MODEL

Moving from Fear to Action in Racial Equity

Applying the Fear-Agency-Action Model to workplace scenarios.

The Fear-Agency-Action Model

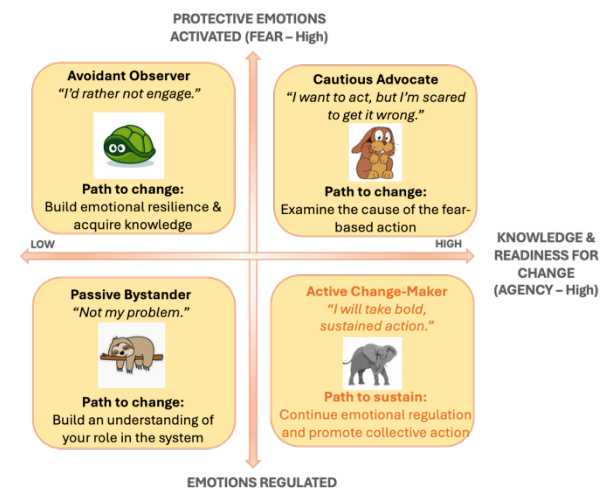
The Fear-Agency-Action Model helps us recognise where we stand and provides a framework for shifting from hesitation to meaningful action.

The model is built on two key dimensions:

- 1 - Fear: How afraid someone (or an organisation) is of engaging with racial equity work.
- 2 - Agency: How much power and willingness someone (or an organisation) has to take meaningful action

When we map these two dimensions, we get four distinct responses:

- **Turtle** - Avoidant Observer (High Fear, Low Agency) – “I’d rather not engage.”
- **Sloth** - Passive Bystander (Low Fear, Low Agency) – “Not my problem.”
- **Rabbit** - Cautious Advocate (High Fear, High Agency) – “I want to act, but I’m scared to get it wrong.”
- **Elephant** - Active Change-Maker (Low Fear, High Agency) – “I will take bold, sustained action.”



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INVITATION FOR REFLECTION:

1. Where do you see yourself?
2. What's holding you in that space?
3. Where do you want to be and what might help you to move there?

Exploring the Fear-Agency-Action Model in Workplace Scenarios:

1. A team-level scenario
2. An organisational-level scenario

Your task is to:

- Identify where you stand within the model in the team-level scenario.
- Identify where your organisation stands in the organisational-level scenario
- Reflect on the factors that influence this.
- Consider potential actions you could take or invite the organisation to take to move toward agency and action.
- Perhaps you could invite this discussion in a team meeting.

WORKPLACE CASE STUDY: Microaggression in a Team Meeting

SCENARIO:

During a team meeting, a senior manager repeatedly mispronounces a junior colleague's name, despite being corrected multiple times. The colleague, a racialised employee, looks visibly uncomfortable but does not correct them again. Other team members notice the exchange.

Which Animal Are You in This Workplace Scenario?

Turtle – Feeling hesitant and unsure

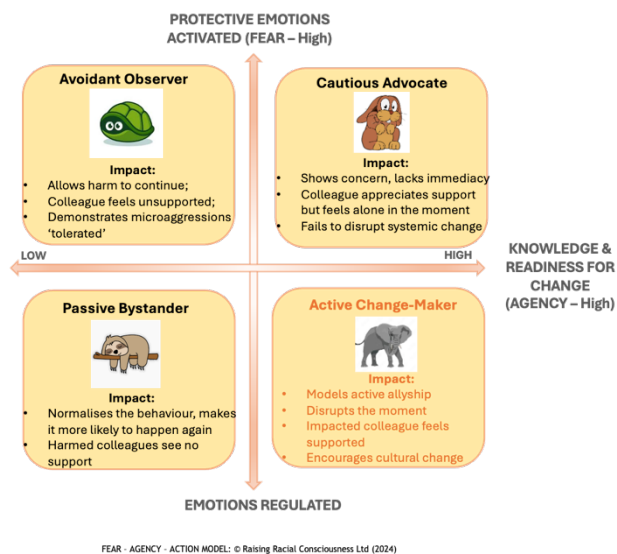
Rabbit – Wanting to engage but holding back

Sloth – Unsure if its your place to speak up

Elephant – Speaking up & challenging the situation

Reflection for You:

How does seeing the impact of action/inaction shift your perspective?



ORGANISATIONAL CASE STUDY: The 'Culture Fit' Hiring Trap

Bringing an organisational lens to equity work is important because bias isn't just about individual beliefs - it's embedded in the systems that shape who gets hired, who advances, and who leads.

A common example is the 'culture fit' hiring trap, where unintentional bias leads to structural exclusion. It's not always about explicit prejudice, but about systems designed to favour comfort over diversity.

SCENARIO:

A hiring panel is discussing a final candidate. One interviewer says:

"They're a great candidate, but I don't think they'd fit our culture."

The candidate is racialised as black and fully meets the qualifications.

Reflection for Your Team:

- How are hiring decisions made in your workplace?
- Are we selecting candidates who bring real value, or just those who feel familiar?
- Are we building for the future or repeating the past?

Real culture change happens in everyday decisions. And hiring is one of the most powerful decisions of all.

