

## Examining Stereotypes Through Self-Awareness:

### Materials:

Ground Rules

Ice Breakers

TV Characters handout

### National Social Studies Standards:

#### Culture and cultural diversity:

1. Guide learners as they predict how data and experiences may be interpreted by people from diverse cultural perspectives and frames of reference.
2. Have learners interpret patterns of behavior reflecting values and attitudes that contribute or pose obstacles to cross-cultural understanding.

#### Individual development and identity

1. Assist learners in articulating personal connections to time, place and social cultural systems
2. Help learners to identify, describe, and express appreciation for the influences of various historical and contemporary cultures on an individual's daily life.
3. Assist learners to describe the ways family, religion, gender, ethnicity, nationality, socioeconomic status, and other groups and cultural influences contribute to the development of a sense of self.
4. Enable learners to analyze the role of perceptions attitudes, values, and beliefs in the development of personal identity.

### Purpose:

The purpose of this lesson is to help students begin to examine their own cultural perspectives in relation to any stereotypes they have, where they learned them, and to begin to question their validity.

It is important that students feel safe in expressing their thoughts and experiences. A good idea would be to provide students with [Ground Rules](#) or have students develop a list of ground rules for these exercises.

Prior to these exercises, it is useful to conduct several [Ice Breaker Activities](#) and low risk activities to help build camaraderie and work toward more high-risk activities.

**Background Information:**

How can we deal with stereotypes unless we are aware of our own? We all have stereotypes and it's important we are aware of what they are in order to begin challenging them in others and ourselves.

Stereotypes are learned attitudes that have significant impact on our behaviors. We learn them from a variety of sources including television, books, music, our peers, families, etc. Stereotypes are generalizations made about a group of people that are usually based on inaccurate or incomplete information. They can be positive or negative, but both can have negative consequences for the person or people being stereotyped. Whenever we stereotype someone, we are ignoring them as an individual and lumping the whole group together as "they are all like that." Stereotypes can be very difficult to change.

Stereotypes happen when we judge people from our own frame of reference or our own cultural expectations about how people should look, behave, talk, etc. This can cause misunderstandings (on both sides) and misjudgments.

**Objectives:**

1. Students will be able to define stereotype.
2. Students will be able to recognize the role media, peers, and family play in teaching stereotypes.
3. Students will be able to identify various types of stereotypes.
4. Students will identify some possible impacts of stereotyping on both those who are stereotyped and those doing the stereotyping.
5. Students will be able to identify ways to challenge or eliminate stereotypes.

**Activity 1:**

To begin discussions concerning stereotypes, pose questions like the following to the class and go into discussion:

1. If a group of men are talking, what do you assume they are talking about? Why?
2. If a group of women are talking about what do you assume they are talking about? Why?
3. Do you think the following statement is true or false? Why?  
White males are more competitive than other groups.
4. Why is it that when someone is talking to a person who doesn't speak English well (or at all) he or she begins to talk louder?

**Activity 2:**

1. Divide students into small groups. Have students discuss the following questions:

- What are the stereotypes that teenagers have of the people around them?
  - Where did you hear/learn them?
2. Have students appoint a recorder as they generate their stereotypes. Allow 10-15 minutes (more or less if needed) for students to discuss and list their stereotypes.
  3. Ask small groups to share with the rest of the group.
  4. Mix groups up again.
  5. Have new groups discuss the next question:
    - Can you think of a time when you felt stereotyped?
    - What happened?
  6. Ask small groups to share with larger group.
  7. Mix groups up again.
  8. Have this group discuss the following questions:
    - Can you think of a time when you stereotyped another person or saw someone being stereotyped?
    - What happened?
    - Come up with some ideas on how to overcome stereotypes.

### **Activity 3:**

Break students into small groups. Have each group come up with a list of 5 questions they'd like to ask their parents, grandparents or an older family member about their stereotypes. Collect all questions and share them with the whole group. As a group, decide which 10 questions to keep. Assign each person to interview an older family member about stereotypes. Have them present the results of the interview to the class. See [Sample Interview Questions](#)

### **Activity 4:**

1. Break students into small groups.
2. Give each student a copy of the [TV Characters](#) worksheet.
3. Have them write a brief description of each character based on what they've seen on television.
4. Have students discuss what the impact of such stereotypes might be on someone who's never met any one from one of these groups before.
5. Next have them discuss what the impact the stereotypes have on persons from the group who are being stereotyped. See [Effects of Stereotypes](#).
6. How might they work to combat those stereotypes with younger children?
7. What can they do to challenge their own stereotypes? See [Combating Stereotypes](#)

**Activity 5:**

Case Study 1: A young Native American child was watching Saturday morning television. In passing the mother noticed she was watching a western. Shortly after the movie was over, the young girl came running downstairs where her mother was doing laundry and exclaimed, “Mom, mom, they killed all the Indians, because they’re dangerous!”

Break students into small groups. Read the case study to them. Ask them to discuss what they think the impact of stereotyping in this movie had on the child, her mother and to answer the following questions: Use [Combating Stereotypes](#) and [Effects of Stereotypes](#) Handouts as needed.

1. How can this mother combat media stereotypes for her child?
2. What would they say or do if it were their child who said it?
3. What might that or any child grow up thinking about Native Americans if this stereotype goes unchallenged?

## **Ground Rules:**

- 1. Value and respect diverse opinions**
- 2. Listen to each other.**
- 3. Takes turns speaking.**
- 4. Everyone participates.**
- 5. Every person has a valuable contribution to make.**
- 6. Remain open to all ideas, even if different from your own.**
- 7. Discuss each idea and determine its validity based on evidence rather than opinion.**
- 8. What's said in here stays in here.**
- 9. No putdowns, hurtful statements, etc.**

## **Ice Breakers:**

Ice Breaker in this unit:

[Introduction to Culture: My Cultural Identity Activity](#)

## **TELEVISION STEREOTYPES**

- 1. Older People**
- 2. Nerds**
- 3. Teenagers**
- 4. Blonde females**
- 5. Native Americans**
- 6. Drug Pushers**
- 7. Cowboys**
- 8. White males**
- 9. Hispanics or Latin Americans**
- 10. Asian Americans**
- 11. African Americans**
- 12. Scientist**
- 13. Teacher**

## Combating Stereotypes

1. Respect each person as a unique individual.
2. Be willing to accept and respect cultural differences.
3. Remember that even within a group, there are individual differences
4. Learn more about other groups through interaction, attending cultural events, reading, attending workshops, taking classes, etc.
5. Take time to get to know someone from a culture different from yours.
6. Ask yourself, "How would I feel if someone were stereotyping me?"
7. Suspend judgment and remember, especially when getting to know someone from a different cultural group, our first impressions are usually incorrect.
8. Try to understand the other person's or group's perspective.
9. Ask yourself, "What did I grow up hearing about ...?" (here put the name of the group such as Native Americans, older people, African Americans, etc.)

## Effects of Stereotypes

1. They distort what we think about a whole group of people.
2. They put people down.
3. They perpetuate misunderstandings.
4. The people who are being stereotyped may begin to believe the negative images about themselves (especially if they are young children).
5. They prevent us from accepting persons from another group.
6. They keep people from other groups on the “outside.”
7. Even if they are positive stereotypes such as: “all Asians are smart or good in math” they put pressure on the people being stereotyped and do not allow for individual differences.

## Sample Interview Questions

1. What are some stereotypes you've heard about (African Americans, Native Americans, etc.)?
2. Where did you hear them?
3. Do you think they're true? Why or why not?
4. Have you had any personal experiences with (a group) that challenged or confirmed the stereotype?
5. Do you think ALL (a group) are like that?
6. How did you learn more about (the group)?
7. Where do you think stereotypes come from?
8. Do you think they are harmful to persons from that group?
9. How do you think people should go about overcoming their stereotypical beliefs?
10. Why do you think we have stereotypes?

## References

1. Lopes, M. (1994). *Realities of Stereotypes*. University of Massachusetts. Cape Cod Extension.  
<http://www.nccc.org/Diversity/drivers.rea.stereotypes.html>
2. Cross, T.L., Bazron, B., Dennis, K.W. & Isaacs, M.P. (1989). *Towards a culturally competent system of care: A monograph on effective services for minority children who are severely emotionally disturbed*. Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University child Development Center, 19-21.