# Exploring Leadership

## SOCIAL AWARENESS: UNDERSTANDING STEREOTYPES

Grouping people into stereotypes is the first step toward dangerous prejudice. Stereotyping is based on the natural human desire to put things into groups, however, it is something that young people must be familiar with in order to prevent racism, sexism, and other forms of discrimination.

### CONVERSATION STARTER:

- Have you ever eaten a kid's meal that came with a toy?

Sometimes the toys are different for boys and girls—maybe a truck for the boys and a stuffed bear for the girls. Who decided that boys like to play with trucks and girls like to play with stuffed animals? When we decide what someone will like or how they will act just because they are a boy or a girl, we are stereotyping. Can you think of other stereotypes you encounter in your daily life?

### KEY OBJECTIVES:

- Understand and identify stereotypes.

- Learn how to look beyond stereotypes.

### WHAT YOU'LL NEED:

- Paper/Pencils

- 24 multi-colored balloons, inflated

- A common pin

## EXPLORATION ACTIVITY:

As a way to deal with the world, the human brain naturally categorizes things: young or old, male or female, big or small. This helps us make decisions and navigate the world efficiently, but it can lead to stereotypes. Stereotyping is when we mistakenly believe that all the individuals within one of our categories share identical (often negative) qualities. Stereotypes make incorrect assumptions about all the members of a particular group, which is not only incorrect but also unfair.

### FACILITATION TIPS:

- Participants may be organized into groups to brainstorm phrases or words.
- Write the words *man* and *woman* side-by-side at the top of a whiteboard or on a piece of chart paper.
- Draw a vertical line between the two words to create a two-column chart.
- Then have participants do the same on their own piece of writing paper.

**Ask:** What are some stereotypes about men and women? (Remember: stereotypes are descriptions we traditionally apply to an entire group even though the individuals within that group may not meet the description, e.g., all men have short hair and all women have long hair.) Have them write words or phrases that describe the qualities or characteristics of a man under the word *man* and words or phrases that describe a woman under the word *woman*. [Typical responses include things like this: Man -- active, sports-lover, short hair, hard working, truck driver, breadwinner, strong / Woman -- loving, nurse, shop, likes flowers, cries easily, long hair]

Call the participants forward to share and "burst" their stereotypes.
One at a time, participants hold up a balloon and read aloud one of their stereotypes about men or women.
The rest of the group then refutes (proves wrong) the stereotype by offering examples of individuals that do not fit the description.
Once satisfied that the stereotype has been refuted, the participant pops the balloon.

## REFLECTION QUESTIONS:

- What changes would you make to your list now that you have heard other stereotypes?
- Did the group "burst" a stereotype you believe is true? Explain.
- Are there descriptions that might fit equally well under both headings?
- Is it fair to say that all men _____ or that all women _____?
- Are stereotype statements fair? Why or why not?

## APPLICATION DISCUSSION:

- What did you learn from this lesson? How did your thinking change?
- Were there times during the lesson when you felt angry or sad?
- Think about a time when you have experienced or witnessed a stereotype in your own life. What was that experience like and how did it make you feel?

## CONCLUSION:

Stereotypes help our brain categorize things, but we have to make sure that we do not think that everyone in a certain category or group is the same. General statements about groups never apply to every individual within the groups. Don't stereotype!

## REFERENCES

https://study.com/academy/lesson/stereotypes-lesson-for-kids-definition-examples.html

*Exploring Leadership Series, Social Awareness: Understanding Stereotypes*

# QUOTES

Definition:

Stereotype: An overly simple picture or opinion of a person, group, or thing. It is stereotypical to say all old people are forgetful.

Quotes:

A stereotype may be negative or positive, but even positive stereotypes present two problems: They are cliches, and they present a human being as far more simple and uniform than any human being actually is.
~Nancy Kress

We can each define ambition and progress for ourselves. The goal is to work toward a world where expectations are not set by the stereotypes that hold us back, but by our personal passion, talents and interests.
~Sheryl Sandberg

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