



# Exploring Leadership

## SOCIAL AWARENESS: UNDERSTANDING STEREOTYPES

Grouping people based on stereotypes can lead to harmful prejudice. While it's natural for people to categorize things, it's important to understand how stereotypes can lead to prejudice and discrimination, like racism and sexism.

### CONVERSATION STARTER:

Have you ever received a kid's meal that came with a toy meant for a specific gender?

Sometimes the toys are different for boys and girls—like a truck for boys and a stuffed bear for girls. Who decided that boys prefer trucks and girls prefer stuffed animals? When we assume what someone will like or how they will act based on their gender, we're stereotyping. Can you think of other stereotypes you see every day?

## EXPLORATION ACTIVITY:

People naturally categorize things, like young or old, male or female, and big or small. While this helps us navigate the world, it can also lead to stereotypes. *Stereotyping* means assuming everyone in a group has the same traits, often in a limiting or negative way. While categorizing is normal, we must avoid making assumptions about people based on these categories.

## FACILITATION TIPS:

- In the activity, youth will explore stereotypes about men and women. By bursting these stereotypes, they'll learn to appreciate individual differences and foster inclusivity.
- Optional: Read and discuss the quotes in the Appendix.
- Optional: Participants may be divided into small groups to brainstorm during the activity.

### KEY OBJECTIVES:

- Understand and identify stereotypes.
- Learn how to look beyond stereotypes.

### WHAT YOU'LL NEED:

- Whiteboard and markers
- Paper and writing utensils
- Assorted balloons, fully inflated
- A pin for popping the balloons

### Bursting Stereotypes:

- Write 'Men' and 'Women' at the top of a whiteboard or paper and draw a line down the middle to create two columns.
- Have everyone draw the same chart on their own paper.
- Ask the group, 'What are some common stereotypes you've heard about men and women?' Encourage them to think of generalizations people often make. (Refer to the Appendix for examples.)
- Ask them to list stereotypes they've heard about men and women, such as the assumption that all men are strong or that all women are emotional.
- Continued on next page...



## EXPLORATION ACTIVITY (CONTINUED):

- After they've completed their lists, invite each participant to come up one by one to "burst" their stereotype. Have them hold up a balloon and read aloud one stereotype they wrote down. The rest of the group will offer examples of people who break that stereotype.
- After the stereotype is challenged and debunked, the participant can pop their balloon with the pin to symbolize breaking down that stereotype.

## REFLECTION QUESTIONS:

- Were there any stereotypes that could apply to both 'Men' and 'Women'?
- Did the group "burst" a stereotype that you previously believed? Explain your thoughts.
- Is it fair to make statements like 'all men \_\_\_\_\_' or 'all women \_\_\_\_\_'? Why or why not?
- After hearing other stereotypes, would you change anything on your list?
- Do you think stereotype statements are fair? Why or why not?



## APPLICATION DISCUSSION:

- Can you recall a time when you encountered or experienced a stereotype? How did it make you feel?
- During this lesson, were there moments when you felt angry or sad?
- What did you learn from this lesson? Has it changed the way you think about stereotypes?

## CONCLUSION:

While stereotypes might seem helpful in categorizing people, they often lead to misunderstandings and unfair treatment. Just because someone is part of a certain group doesn't mean they fit every stereotype about that group. We should strive to look beyond these labels and, together, break down stereotypes to recognize each person's individuality and create a more inclusive community!

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## REFERENCES

Stereotypes Lesson for Kids: Definition & Examples <https://study.com/academy/lesson/stereotypes-lesson-for-kids-definition-examples.html>



## APPENDIX:

### *Definition:*

**Stereotype:** An overly simplistic view or opinion of a person, group, or thing.

### *Examples:*

- Saying that all older people are forgetful.
- Believing that all teenagers are irresponsible.
- Assuming that all people who wear glasses are nerdy.
- Thinking that all girls like pink and dolls, while all boys like blue and trucks.
- Claiming that all men have short hair and all women have long hair.

## 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