

# Stereotype Busters

**Class Time Needed:** 20 minutes

## Materials

- A cassette tape or CD player and recorded music
- 4 small containers
- Pieces of paper, each printed with a stereotype (Examples: All redheads have short tempers, all nurses are women, all tall people like basketball, only men like sports cars, all doctors are rich)

**Note:** Be careful not to use racial or other stereotypes that might offend participants.

**Objective:** Students will learn appropriate ways to address stereotyping.

## Introduction

Each of us hears or makes stereotypical comments every day. Students need to become aware of the damaging effects of generalizations and stereotypes. They also need to develop tools for addressing stereotypes when they hear them and checking their own thinking when they find themselves using stereotypes to make judgments. This activity gives students an opportunity to practice ways to reduce stereotyping.

## Procedure

1. Have the students arrange their chairs in a large circle.
2. Review the concepts of stereotypes and prejudice and come to an agreement about definitions. In this context, a stereotype is an oversimplified statement based on a single characteristic. For example, the statement "All men hate to cook" expresses a stereotype. Prejudice is to **pre**-judge or to form an opinion (usually negative) about someone or something before all the facts are known. "Richard can't cook--he's a guy!" is an example of prejudice.
3. Discuss why stereotypes and prejudice are harmful. For example, they are often based on faulty information, they get in the way of knowing people as individuals, and they can lead to serious misunderstandings.
4. Tell students that even though it is easy to fall into the habit of using stereotypes to prejudge people, there are ways to reduce stereotypes and combat prejudice. One way is to check our own thinking, to be careful of jumping to conclusions based on generalizations or others' opinions. Another way is to politely challenge stereotypes when we hear them by offering evidence that the stereotype is false.
5. Model some statements that "bust" the men-hate-to-cook-stereotype, for example:
  - I don't like to stereotype, so I can't agree with you. My brother makes the best bread I've ever tasted.
  - I don't like to stereotype, so I can't agree with you. I'm sure there are many men who like to cook.
6. Explain that the students will participate in a game that will help them become "Stereotype Busters." Participants will pass a container around the circle when the music begins. When the music stops, the student who is holding the container will read the stereotype it holds. Then, the student to his or her right will respond, using statements similar to those modeled earlier. Encourage other students in the circle to offer additional suggestions.
7. Repeat the activity with the remaining containers.

## Debriefing

Use the following questions to help students think about how and when to challenge stereotypes in real life situations.

**Note: During the debriefing, be sure to discuss when it is and is not appropriate to challenge statements made by other people.**

1. How did it feel to speak up about stereotypes?
2. What happened when it was your turn to respond? Was it easy or difficult to "bust" the stereotype?
3. What are some other stereotypes? How do you think these are learned? What are some ways to respond to stereotypes?

4. It has been said that a stereotypical statement tells more about the person who says it than about the people who are being stereotyped. What does this mean? Do you agree or disagree?
5. Do you think you could really use "Stereotype Busters" to check your own thinking? Would you feel comfortable doing this with a family member? A friend?
6. What if you heard an older person make a stereotypical statement? (Caution students that it is best to know people before challenging their statements. We can't predict a stranger's response. The best response is to do a mental check to make sure we are not influenced by someone else's prejudices.)
7. What advice would you give to a friend who is the object of stereotyping and prejudice?

### Extending the Ideas

- If stereotypes (oversimplified images of people, issues, or events) lead to prejudice (judgments based on stereotypical images), then prejudice leads to discrimination--treating someone unfairly because we believe their differences make them inferior. Discuss this continuum with your students, using news stories or fictional stories that deal with discrimination issues as examples. Have students look for stories related to discrimination in magazines and newspapers and on television broadcasts over a period of several days. Have students identify the stereotypes that lie behind these stories. What assumptions (prejudgments) were made about the people who experienced discrimination?
- If your class is corresponding with a Peace Corps Volunteer through World Wise Schools, ask the Volunteer questions like these.
  - Did you have any preconceived ideas about your host country before going there? How were these prejudgements changed during your volunteer service?
  - Do the people in your host country have preconceived ideas about Americans? How do you correct these ideas?
  - Are there other stereotypes in your host country similar to the ones in the United States?
- People often develop oversimplified ideas about the homeless. A study of the causes of homelessness and the services available for the homeless in your community might lead your class to a service-learning project. After studying the problem, and learning about the issues, students could develop a plan to help meet community needs. Use the [Service-Learning Rubric](#) in the [introduction](#) to this guide to help plan a project with strong impact.

**Service-Learning Rubric**

Service-learning is integrating the regular classroom curriculum with a problem or issue to meet a community or school-based need. It is the method by which young people learn and develop through active participation in thoughtfully organized service projects. Dr. Mary J. Selke, UNI, devised the following rubric framework for determining what projects accomplish.

	<b>Strong Impact</b>	<b>Good Impact</b>	<b>Some Impact</b>	<b>Minimal Impact</b>
1. Meet actual community needs	Determined by current research conducted or discovered by students with teacher assistance where appropriate	Determined by past research discovered by students with teacher assistance where appropriate	Determined by making a guess at what community needs may be	Community needs secondary to what a project teacher wants to do; project considers only student needs
2. Are coordinated in collaboration with community	Active, direct collaboration with community by the teacher and/or student	Community members act as consultants in the project development	Community members are informed of the project directly	Community members are coincidentally informed or not knowledgeable at all
3. Are integrated into academic curriculum	Service-learning as instructional strategy with content/service components integrated	Service-learning as a teaching technique with content/service components concurrent	Service-learning part of curriculum but sketchy connections, with emphasis on service	Service-learning supplemental to curriculum, in essence just a service project or good deed
4. Facilitate active student reflection	Students think, share, produce reflective products individually and as group members	Students think, share, produce group reflection only	Students share with no individual reflective projects	Ran out of time for a true reflection; just provided a summary of events
5. Use new academic skill/knowledge in real world settings	All students have direct application of new skill or knowledge in community service	All students have some active application of new skill or knowledge	Some students more involved than others or little community service involvement	Skill knowledge used mostly in the classroom; no active community service experience
6. Help develop sense of caring for and about others	Reflections show affective growth regarding self in community and the importance of service	Reflections show generic growth regarding the importance of community service	Reflections restricted to pros and cons of particular service project regarding the community	Reflections limited to self-centered pros and cons of the service project
7. Improve quality of life for person(s) served	Facilitate change or insight; help alleviate a suffering; solve a problem; meet a need or address an issue	Changes enhance an already good community situation	Changes mainly decorative, but new and unique benefits realized in community	Changes mainly decorative, but limited community benefit, or are not new and unique