

Mini-lesson

Challenge a Stereotype



grades 6-8



30 minutes

Objectives

- Understand why challenging stereotypes is important.
- Practice disrupting stereotypes.

Essential Questions

- Why do stereotypes need to be challenged?
- How can we challenge stereotypes?



MATERIALS

Worksheet: Just Because ([PDF](#) | [Google](#))
Post-its (optional)
Chart paper
Markers

THEMES

Empathy
Inclusion
Social responsibility

Vocabulary

STEREOTYPE: noun; a widely held but fixed and oversimplified image or idea of a particular type of person or thing

EMPATHY: noun; the ability to understand and share the feelings of another.

Before you Begin

If your students need a more complete introduction to stereotypes, consider starting with ThinkGive's "[What is a Stereotype](#)" Mini-Lesson.

Program Connections

This activity has been modified from a lesson in our Middle School program. Visit [Our Programs](#) page to learn more.

THINK • GIVE

Ask your group what they think about this statement: “Boys need to be tough and shouldn’t cry.” Do they agree? Why or why not? Remain neutral as students discuss.

Watch: [Boys Don’t Cry](#) (2:56). This short film challenges the stereotype that boys aren’t supposed to cry and exposes how this phenomena stigmatizes normal human emotions.

Discuss as a whole group:

- What are your thoughts about the video?
 - How did the people in the video seem impacted by the stereotype?
 - Are stereotypes true or are they made up? Why do you think that?
 - Why do we need to challenge stereotypes?
 - Turn to someone next to you and complete this sentence together: “Just because boys cry, doesn’t mean they _____.”
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CONNECT + CLOSE

Activity: Just Because...

Share the definition of a stereotype (see vocab). As a class, brainstorm stereotypes. Explain that statements starting with “All...” usually indicate a stereotype because they are making a generalization or assumption about everyone in a group (e.g., “All boys like sports”).

NOTE: Some students might feel uncomfortable listing stereotypes they have seen or experienced. Explain that sharing about a stereotype does not mean we are agreeing with the stereotype; rather, by honestly and bravely looking at stereotypes we are able to question or challenge them.

Examples include:

- Poor people don’t work hard.
- Older people are inactive.
- Girls aren’t strong leaders.
- Someone who can’t speak English well isn’t smart.
- Someone in a wheelchair is helpless.

Explain: All of us hold stereotypes. It is a normal human tendency. So it is important to spend time compassionately challenging the stereotypes, not the person doing the stereotyping; it is not a personal attack (although it certainly can feel like it), it is an opportunity for all of us to learn and do better.

Hand out the [Worksheet: Just Because](#) ([PDF](#) | [Google](#)). For this activity, students will state specific stereotypes that they contradict both in how they live and what they believe by completing the sentences: "Just because I... doesn't mean I..." and "Just because someone... doesn't mean they..."

Offer the following examples when explaining the activity:

- Just because I **am a girl** doesn't mean I **like the color pink**.
- Just because someone **plays sports** doesn't mean they **are aggressive**.

Students complete the sentences. To make this activity more active, list the prompts as headings on the whiteboard/chart paper and have students write responses on Post-its and stick them beneath each.

[Ask volunteers to share their statements.](#)

[Discuss as a group:](#)

- How does the "Just Because" activity give us a good way to start challenging stereotypes?
- How can empathy help us to compassionately challenge stereotyping we notice in ourselves and/or others?
- How does it feel to question or challenge stereotypes? About yourself? About others?
- What is difficult about questioning or challenging a stereotype?
- What are some small (yet brave!) ways to practice getting more comfortable with compassionately challenging stereotypes?

ACTION

In the coming days/week, students practice compassionately noticing when they or others are stereotyping. If they feel they are in a safe environment surrounded by supportive people, they can practice compassionately challenging the stereotype.

REFLECTION

Lead a discussion or invite students to journal, using the following questions as a guide:

- How would you think or act differently if you began to notice and challenge stereotypes that you hold?
- How can we start to develop our skills around challenging stereotypes?