

SEL Activity

What is a Stereotype?



grades 4-8



30 minutes

Objectives

- Recognize and understand stereotypes.
- Consider ways to disrupt stereotypes.

Essential Questions

- What is a stereotype?
- What are the impacts of stereotypes?
- How can we move beyond stereotypes?

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.



MATERIALS

Post-its (optional)
Chart paper
Markers

SEL CORE COMPETENCIES

Self-awareness
Social awareness
Relationship skills

Before you Begin

Consider if students will generate their list of stereotypes or brainstorm a list as a class (THINK.GIVE section). If generating their lists, create small groups and place marker(s) and chart paper in several areas of the room for students to collaboratively ideate.

NOTE: Some students might feel uncomfortable listing stereotypes they have seen or experienced.

Program Connections

This activity comes from a lesson in our ThinkGive Middle School programs. To learn more, visit our [PROGRAMS](#) page.

THINK • GIVE

Watch: [The Problem with Apu](#) Trailer (2:06). This film is about how The Simpsons portrays the Indian character Apu. It highlights the danger of stereotypes and how they can impact people.

Discuss:

- What are your thoughts about the video?
- Where did you notice a lack of empathy?
- How could empathy have helped?
- How did the people in the video seem impacted by the stereotypes?
- In some clips, the Indian actors laugh about how Indians are portrayed (e.g., minutes 0:35–0:41). Does this make a stereotype okay? Why do you think they were laughing?

Activity: Station Rotation

Students form pairs or small groups. Provide each pair/group a sheet of chart paper and markers, and assign each a topic (draw from the following list or create your own).

TOPICS: Boys, girls, people experiencing homelessness, blind people, teenagers, elderly, athletes, models, immigrants.

Students write their topic at the top of the chart paper, then any stereotypes that come to mind about their topic. Remind them that statements starting with “All...” usually indicate a stereotype because this makes a generalization or assumption about everyone in a group (e.g., “All boys like sports”).

After 1–2 minutes, students rotate to the next group’s chart paper. They read the new topic and list of stereotypes, adding a star/check next to those that resonate with them and adding additional stereotypes of their own. Continue rotations until groups have visited all topics then hang the chart papers around the room. Students do a silent gallery walk to take in all of the responses.

CONNECT + CLOSE

Discuss as a class:

- Which stereotypes stood out to you? Why?
- Which stereotypes surprised you? Why?
- Why do you think stereotypes exist?
- How are stereotypes harmful?
- How do certain stereotypes hold people back?
- How do certain stereotypes put unfair expectations on people?

ACTION

Explain: In the coming days/week, try to notice when you and/or others are stereotyping. If this happens, be compassionate—we’re all learning. Ask yourself or others, “Is that always true?” to think beyond the stereotype.

REFLECTION

- Why is it important to notice and/or challenge stereotypes with compassion?
- How would the world be different if we didn’t have stereotypes?