



## WHO AM I?

*"If you don't like something, change it. If you can't change it. Change your attitude."*

—Maya Angelou

### OVERVIEW

Students reflect on their individual identities and the stereotypes that people might hold about them, followed by a discussion on the impact of stereotypes and implicit biases.

### PLANNING FOR IT

#### WHEN YOU MIGHT USE THIS PRACTICE

- To help students understand what stereotypes and implicit bias are and how they impact others
- To build a positive classroom climate and positive peer relationships by surfacing possible stereotypes students may hold about each other
- When an incident caused by stereotyping in the community or society at large has occurred

#### TIME REQUIRED

- < 1 hour

#### LEVEL

- Middle School
- High School
- College

#### MATERIALS

- Paper and pencil

#### LEARNING OBJECTIVE

Students will:

- Understand what are stereotypes and implicit bias

- Identify when an stereotype or implicit bias is being used
- Compare and contrast how assumptions are made about someone's identity

## ADDITIONAL SUPPORTS

- [Making Practices Culturally Responsive](#)
- [Adapting Practices for Students with Special Needs](#)
- [Making a Practice Trauma-Informed](#)
- [Making Classrooms and Schools Trauma-Informed and Healing-Centered](#)

## CHARACTER STRENGTHS

- Empathy
- Humility
- Respect
- Gratitude

## SEL COMPETENCIES

- Self-awareness
- Social awareness
- Relationship skills

## MINDFULNESS COMPONENTS

- Non-judgment
- Open awareness

## HOW TO DO IT

### REFLECTION BEFORE THE PRACTICE

- Prior to starting this practice, it is important to explore your own experience on how you have made judgments, decisions and behavior based on stereotypes of people so that you can better understand how students may feel and/or identify the emotions that may appear during the practice. In other words, it will help to increase your empathy for students' reactions.
- Think about a time when someone made an assumption about you based on a part of your identity. What happened? How did you feel? How did you respond?
- Next, reflect on a time that you held a stereotype about someone. How did you recognize that you held this belief? What were the consequences of this stereotype to you and to the other person?
- Remember to meet teenagers where they are in their identity development, and not pushing them to dig deeper than they're comfortable with

## INSTRUCTIONS

### BEFORE YOU BEGIN

Understanding stereotypes and implicit biases is an important part of bridging differences because it allows us to better understand our assumptions and how sometimes it can prevent us from forming meaningful relationships. Reflect on the [definitions](#) of stereotypes and implicit biases and consider effective examples to share with your students.

- **Stereotypes:** A stereotype is a widely held and simplified belief about a specific group. Groups are often [stereotyped](#) on the basis of sex, gender identity, race and ethnicity, nationality, age, socioeconomic status, language, and so forth. For example, the color blue is for boys and the color pink is for girls.

**Implicit bias:** A [negative attitude](#), of which one is not consciously aware, against a specific social group that sometimes [leads to discrimination](#), even when people feel they are being fair. For example, young people are lazy and they don't register to vote.

### ACTIVITY

**Step #1:** Begin by reviewing the definitions of stereotypes and implicit bias. Then, invite students to reflect on their individual identities. Explain that these identities can include unique qualities, personal characteristics, hobbies, or interests that are special to each person such as gender, race, ethnicity, language, age, politics, religion, etc. For example:

- I am Latina
- I am non-disabled
- I am Christian

Invite students to take about 1 ½ to 2 minutes to jot down as many "I am..." statements as they can think of (here is a [handout](#), if you would like to use one).

**Step #2:** Now, ask students to choose one to three of their identities and the type of assumptions people might make about them based on that identity.

I am (one identity per box)	Write 3 assumptions people might make about you based on this identity
1.	1. 2. 3.
2.	1. 2. 3.
3.	1. 2. 3.

**Step #3:** In small groups, ask students to reflect by writing about and discussing the following questions.

1. Why do you think people make judgments based on stereotypes?
2. Tell about a time that someone made an assumption about you based on a part of your identity. What happened? How did you feel? How did you respond?
3. How can stereotyping and implicit bias prevent us from getting to know a person?

**Step #4:** Ask students to individually reflect on the lesson by answering the following questions:

- When was the last time you noticed holding a stereotype about someone based on their identity? Did you give yourself the chance to meet or get to know that person?
- How can you use this lesson in the future when you meet someone new about whom you've held a stereotype?

## CLOSURE

Express gratitude for your students' participation and acknowledge that reflecting on stereotypes and implicit biases is not easy to do. Consider inviting students to offer reflections on why this discussion is important if we want to have greater awareness and create more meaningful relationships with people from different identities.

## REFLECTION AFTER THE PRACTICE

- How did you feel while facilitating this session? Did any uncomfortable emotions come up? If so, how did you navigate them?
- What was the most challenging part of facilitating this practice? How might you address those challenges in the future?.
- Do you notice whether students are more aware of stereotypes they might have?

## THE RESEARCH BEHIND THE PRACTICE

### EVIDENCE THAT IT WORKS

Research tells us that we tend to respond more fairly and favorably towards people who appear similar to us. For instance, people tend to share more with those who have the same social group identity (e.g., race). We also show a tendency to [punish](#) people more harshly when they have behaved unfairly towards someone who shares our social group identity—particularly if they represent a different social group from ours (e.g., a different gender or sexual orientation).

However, [research](#) finds that perspective-taking can reduce our biased responses by increasing our perceptions of similarity with those from different social groups, helping us to see them in a more favorable light.

### WHY DOES IT MATTER?

Although, [research](#) shows that humans have a preference for fairness, stereotypes we hold may influence our behavior in ways that we don't always recognize, resulting in unfair outcomes. Teaching adolescents to recognize the stereotypes they may hold—and how those stereotypes might impact the experiences of others—can help reduce automatic responses and ultimately create a more positive school environment where students treat each other with greater fairness and respect.

## SOURCE

[Generation Citizen](#) — [Lesson 2 Handbook: Who Am I?](#)