



DEI

DIVERSITY, EQUITY,
AND INCLUSION



Stereotyping and Stereotype Threat

***Make sure Guidelines for Interaction are established prior to any DEI discussion. ***

ACTIVITY: I Am, but I Am Not...

Activity Type: I Am, but I Am Not...

Note: **Bold** items are meant to be used as a script. **As much as possible, use the words provided verbatim.** Remember that your role is a facilitator, not the expert. Pull answers and information from the audience. Keep it simple. Remember this is an introduction to concepts and terms, not a deep dive.

Activity Instructions:

This inclusion activity suggested by MIT is a great way to break down misconceptions and stereotypes by allowing individuals to report on how they identify themselves, while also allowing them to address the stereotypes behind these identifying factors.

1. Each participant should fold a piece of paper in half to create two separate columns. In the first column, write "I Am". In the second column, write "I Am Not".
2. In between these two columns, write the word "But". The final phrase will read "I am _____, but I am not _____."
3. Participants should fill in the first blank with some kind of common identifier, such as their race, religion, etc. and the second with a common stereotype about that group which is not true of them (whether the stereotype is positive or negative). Ex: "I am Asian, but I am not good at math."
4. Have everyone write at least 5 statements, then, allow them to share their statements with the group to begin an open and respectful discourse on stereotypes.

Listen to the answers, you will get a lot of the key points of the lesson from them. You may hear answers like:

- "I am white, but I am not racist", and "I am Muslim, but I am not a terrorist". Appropriate responses to their answers should be affirming. **"Yes, good one!"** (*Then simply repeat, summarize, or use a small soundbite of what they just said before moving on to someone else's response.*)
- Other answers will be: "One person does not speak for an entire group.", or "We should not be judged based on the actions of a single person." Again, other good facilitation words: **"That's a great point!"** (*Then simply repeat, summarize, or use a small soundbite of what they just said before moving on to someone else's response.*) Other good responses: **"Exactly!", "You're right on with that!", "That's an interesting spin. Thanks for sharing that."**
- You might EVEN get someone to use the term stereotype. If so, that's great! Again, *affirm, repeat/summarize, or use a soundbite* and move to the next person unless that was the last group to share.

Once you have asked and heard from your audience, begin your lesson wrap up.

Say: **"Those were all great answers! Thank you to those who shared. A lot of what I heard described the basis of this session and that's the difference stereotyping. As a definition..."**

(If someone during the sharing portion already brought up stereotyping, then you can say this: **"As _____ pointed out earlier, stereotypes are often placed on us due to a preconceived notion. As a definition..."**)



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- **Stereotype is something conforming to a fixed or general pattern, more especially, a standardized mental picture that is held in common by members of a group and that represents an oversimplified opinion, prejudiced attitude, or uncritical judgment.**

From here ask:

So, what is another stereotype, negative or positive, that we see often? Response to that answer: “Yes, exactly right.”

Continue with saying: **Stereotypes are not always negative and may be intended to be a compliment, but what may seem ‘complimentary’ to you can still be perceived as a negative assumption to another. For example:**

If you were to say to an African-American ‘I’m sure you do really well in sports’ and they actually do not, they may feel like they are not living up to expectations or feel bad about themselves.

Next, you can ask the group for examples of positive stereotypes that they feel do not apply to them. Then ask them how they would feel if they were assumed to fit this positive stereotype when they actually did not. Wait and listen to answers (affirm, summarize, or soundbite) then, explain the following:

As I stated before, a stereotype is something conforming to a fixed or general pattern. Now that we have covered that, we start to move on to stereotype threat. A lot of the feelings we discussed are feelings we might experience with stereotype threat.

The definition of this is a situational predicament in which people are or feel themselves to be at risk of confirming negative stereotypes about their social group.

Stereotype threat can also apply when a person feels at risk of not confirming positive stereotypes about their social group. The feelings associated with this are just like what we discussed earlier. Would anyone like to give an example of a stereotype threat?”

Listen to the answer that is given and answer with **“That’s a great example!”** then reaffirm their answer using soundbites. You can ask for more than one example, just make sure to encourage the answer before restating it to the group. Here are some things you might hear or can use as an example if you don’t have any volunteers:

Being emotional and being a woman, being good at sports but not at academics, or even as mentioned as an earlier example, being Asian and not being good at math.

Lesson Wrap Up: Think for the Future

In summary, something for you to think about is:

Everyone is their own person and we cannot expect them to be the representative of their entire social group/groups. Knowing the stereotypes, you face as an individual and how that makes you feel, apply that to those around you. Remember to take individuals as they are instead of making them the example for others.