



What do You Really Think?

Life Skills:

Self Responsibility, Accepting Differences

What to Do:

Understand how generalizations can lead to stereotypes and misunderstandings.

Measuring Success:

Youths examine their own attitudes and ethics through group discussion about common generalities.

Audience:

7th – 12th grades

Time Involved:

30-60 minutes

Group Size:

5-15

Preparation and Materials

- Copies of statements found in lesson for youths to take home.

Introduction

Whether we realize it or not, we all have ideas about the world and its peoples. These ideas form our attitudes or responses to objects, people or situations. Attitudes contribute to the value system, or code of ethics that each of us lives by. Our attitudes and values influence our perceptions, observations or processes by which we come to know and to think about characteristics and qualities of other people or objects. Sometimes our attitudes and lack of information cause us to form stereotypes or false generalizations about people and cultures. This activity will help us identify our attitudes, and perceptions, and to think about whether they have led to stereotypical views of the world.

The Activity

Here are statements that will help you think about your values and attitudes. Each of these statements focuses on a particular group and the stereotypes that have emerged about each one. (*Read each statement out loud and lead a discussion about the responses.*) Do you agree or disagree? Why?

“People from Latin America all tend to be a little dirty.”
“All Japanese people work very hard and are extremely stingy.”
“Most old people spend their days in rocking chairs, staring out the window.”
“Most men are slob.”
“All Italians are fat from eating too much pasta.”
“Kids are all alike. They show no respect for their elders, have poor manners and use speech that is as sloppy as their dress. They don’t realize how good they have it.”
“All women are bad drivers.”
“People in the United States are wasteful.”
“The United States is a country of violence.”
“Jewish people are aggressive and pushy.”
“Blondes have more fun.”

(Adapted from Florida Extension Service, “Accepting Each Other”)

Reflect/Discuss

Share What You Did

Did our group agree on most of our responses to the statements?
Have you heard many people make statements like these?

Tell What’s Important

How do people form generalizations like these?
Are generalizations positive, negative, dangerous? Explain.
Can you think of organized groups that promote generalizations like these?

Generalize to Your Life

How did you develop your attitudes and character?
How should you respond when you hear dangerous generalizations (stereotypes) expressed?
Do you have stereotypes of other groups that you need to reconsider?
How and what attitudes, values and stereotypes have you changed?

Apply

Before our next meeting, let’s share this exercise with friends and family. (*Compare responses at the next meeting and list ways to overcome generalizations.*)

More Challenges

- Create additional statements that reflect values, attitudes and stereotypes
- Find pictures in magazines that contradict these stereotypes
- Attend a workshop on character or ethics (i.e. Character Counts)
- Conduct a 4-H seminar on values, attitudes and stereotypes. Invite parents, friends, siblings – both younger and older – to attend. You also may invite foreign exchange students, families from other countries, military personnel, missionaries (anyone who has ever lived overseas).