



## Ground Rules

# Skill 26: Avoiding Stereotypes and Prejudices

### Activity A: What is A Stereotype?

#### Activity Skills:

Critical thinking, group discussion, brainstorming, writing, one on one communication.

#### Leadership Skills:

Stereotypes and how they affect our interactions and perceptions of others.

#### Suggested Level:

Beginning

#### Time:

45 minutes

#### Supplies needed:

- Paper
- Pens and pencils to write

#### Do Ahead:

- Make copies of worksheets

#### Source:

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#### Based On:

*Diversity Activities for Youth Adults* by Penn State College of Agriculture Sciences Cooperative Extension  
EdChange Multicultural Pavilion  
<http://www.edchange.org/multicultural/activities/circlesofself.html>  
Wisebytes.net

#### BACKGROUND:

As a leader, it is important to be aware of your own attitudes, stereotypes, and expectations and be open to discovering the limitations they place on your perspective. We have all been socialized to believe many myths and misconceptions and none of us remain untouched by the discriminatory messages in our society. Be honest with yourself about your own prejudices and biases. If you do not know something, or are not sure how to handle a situation, say so, and seek the information or help that you need.

#### WHAT TO DO:

##### *Herman Grid*

Pass Around copies of "The Herman Grid". Ask participants to share their impression of the image.

The explanation of the Herman Grid, according to [Wisebytes.net](http://Wisebytes.net) is that: "In these grids, you can see small grey dots bouncing around in the intersections of the gridlines, except at the grid intersection which you are actually looking at. The dots appear to move because as you move your eyes, the one you try to look at disappears, whereas the one you were looking at reappears."

Are the gray dots really there? This is an example of how we sometimes see things that don't really exist and it can even happen when we see people.

On a piece of paper participants should brainstorm as many words as they can that describe their identity. Pass around the "Identity Circles" handout. Instruct participants to write their name in the center circle. Now select four things from your Identity Brainstorm list that you have no control over and write them in one of the smaller circles. Select four things about yourself that you can not change and write these in the other circle.

Every participant should now find a work partner who they do not know well, and they should decide who will speak and who will listen. If there are an odd number of participants the facilitator will participate.

Allow 10 minutes for participant share two stories. After 10 minutes stop and allow the listener to share. First participants should share a story when they felt especially proud to be associated with one of the four identifiers for the handout. Next share a story about a time it was uncomfortable or even painful to be associated with one of the four identifiers from the handout. Participants should then fill in the "I am" and, "I am not" statements at the bottom of the Identity Circles handout.

Provide your own example, such as "I am a teacher, but I am NOT an

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<http://wisebytes.net/illusions/hermans.php>Bottom of Form

**Notes:**

authoritarian."

This statement is an opportunity to challenge a stereotype they have heard about one dimension of their identity that fails to describe them accurately.

Allow 5 minutes for participants to silently walk around the room and read each others their stereotype statements.

#### **TALK IT OVER:**

***Reflect:***

- Where do stereotypes come from?
- What did you learn about the people here?

***Apply:***

- How can you avoid stereotyping people?
- Why is it important for leaders to be aware of stereotypes?

#### **BEYOND THE BOX:**

***Optional Homework:***

Draw a two sided picture. One side the paper make a drawing which represents how others see you. On the opposite side create a drawing to express who you are on the inside or how you see yourself.

***Resources and Web Links:***

["Teaching Community: A Pedagogy of Hope](#) By Bell Hooks

[The New Normal: Dealing with Differences](#)

[http://www.pbs.org/inthemix/newnormal/teacha\\_dealing.html](http://www.pbs.org/inthemix/newnormal/teacha_dealing.html)