

ANSWER THESE QUESTIONS

A stereotype is an opinion you form about **all** the people in a category or group based on what you have heard about **some** people in that category.

Do you stereotype people you don't even know? Have you seen stereotypes in action? Have you experienced them?

Answer the following questions and compare answers with your classmates.

- Have you ever been described in a way that included your race?
- Can you list some stereotypes for blacks, whites, teenagers, gays, men and women?
- Have you ever been encouraged to act in a particular way because of your gender?
- Is it okay for people of different races to date? Is it okay for them to marry?
- What do you assume about someone who lives in an expensive home? About someone who lives in a public housing project?



Few women work in construction. Does our society discourage girls from taking up this kind of career? How? Why?



It is unusual for people of different races to date. Does our society discourage mixed race dating? How? Why?

DISCUSS THE PICTURES

Look through today's newspaper and clip pictures of people in the news. Paste them on paper, or hang them up where everyone can see them. From the picture, write down what you think the people in the pictures would be like. Then read the stories and see if your description is true.

Repeat this activity by bringing pictures from home and having your classmates describe what they think each person would be like.

When you have finished, compare ideas on how you judged the people in the pictures.

By the color of their hair? The expression on their faces? Their skin? The clothes they wear? Their sex or age? Their jewelry? How about the way they stand?

Are these stereotypes? Were you surprised at the conclusions? How right or wrong was your class's assumptions about the people in the paper, or the people you knew?

ROLE PLAYING

Look through the newspaper to find stories related to diversity issues that are important to you and your classmates. These could include stories about racial issues, dating, religious differences, holidays, gender, social status or handicapped individuals.

Do some role playing. How would you act if you were the person being written about in the story? Pretend a reporter has asked you a question that you see in the story, and write down your own answer or "quote." Compare it to what the person in the story said, and see what you can conclude about values you do or do not share with the person in the article.

THE -ISMS

Some stereotypes are defined through "-ISMs."

"-ISMs" are a kind of discrimination against people because of something that's out of their control—their sex, their age, their skin color or their ethnic heritage. Here are a few:

- **Racism**—Separating people due to their race, and believing that people of other races are inferior.
- **Sexism**—Putting labels on people because of their sex. For example: "She can't handle the job because women are too emotional."
- **Classism**—Defining people by how much money they do or do not have. "He wouldn't like the orchestra concert; he works in a gas station." They wouldn't like that kind of music.
- **Ageism**—Discriminating against people, young and old, due to their age. "Don't bother asking her opinion, she's 80 years old."

Other "-ISMs" don't have a name, but deal with appearance:

- Fat vs. skinny
- Tall vs. short
- Blond vs. brown
- Pretty vs. ugly

WHAT ABOUT IT

Look around the room. Have you ever put anyone into a category that reflected one or several of these "ISMs?" Are you brave enough to admit it and talk about it? Are "ISMs" more dangerous if they are out in the open, or hidden? Do some "ISMs" affect you but not grownups, and vice versa?

Have you ever been an "ISM" victim? Which "ISM" affected you? How did you feel? How did you know that you were being discriminated against?