

Stereotyping

Upper key stage 2

Learning Intention:

- To recognise and challenge stereotypes.

Learning Outcome:

- To be able to define what stereotyping is.
- To be able to identify when stereotyping occurs.
- To have explored media – music, television, magazines etc – portrayal of stereotypical images.
- To have practiced challenging stereotypical views in a safe environment.

Teacher Introduction:

Start by saying: We are going to be thinking about the way we make decisions about other people.

We will be learning about how things like television programmes and adverts can affect our judgement, and we will take some time to think about how we can make sure we always try to think for ourselves. We will use the example of gender – boys and girls, men and women – in the lessons but there are other ways in which we need to be careful, such as when we are thinking about people from other countries. We will need to remember our working agreement for these lessons.

Resources:

- One large “agree” and one large “disagree” card.
- Pens, paper, crayons.
- Sticky notes.
- A sheet printed with the following “agree” and “disagree” statements (alternatively teachers may wish to draw up their own to reflect local need):

Girls have long hair	Boys have short hair	Girls should not play computer games
Boys wear trousers	Girls like playing with dolls	Boys like playing with cars
Girls are gentle	Boys are rough	Girls like pink
Boys like science	Girls like art	Boys shouldn't cry
Women are better at caring for babies than men	Men and women should share the housework	Men are stronger than women
Men are better at cooking than women	Women are better drivers than men	Men are best at football
Men do not make good teachers	Women are better at dancing than men	Men and women should wear what they like

Activity 1:

Ask the children to suggest ways in which they think boys and girls are different, stressing that this should not include physical characteristics. Scribe their answers. Talk to the children about the reasons for their suggestions, giving the boys and girls a chance to question and react to each other's responses.

Discuss the historical and social reasons why these differences might exist – for example, describing how in the past, married women in some professions (for example teachers) were not allowed to work and so would be housewives whilst men were the breadwinners; how there were no nurseries and pre-schools so someone had to stay at home to look after children and people thought that women were better at this than men; and how in the days before automation many jobs required a great deal of physical strength.

Also useful for: UE, FP

Activity 2:

Using the suggestions from activity 1 as a prompt, explore with the class what they feel makes a “perfect” man and woman and scribe their suggestions for each (for example, a “perfect” woman should be slim, pretty, have long hair, be tall, clever, and rich, wear designer clothes and so forth). Ask where the children got these ideas from – such as through newspapers, music videos, television programmes.

Ask the children to arrive at a class definition of “stereotyping,” such as “an idea that we hold about how something or someone is like, without really knowing about it.” Write up any celebrities' names that are suggested and explain how these ideals are an example of stereotyping. For instance, female celebrities may be used as examples of an idealised physical appearance.

Ask the children if they know any perfect men and women in real life – people who meet all the criteria they have decided make someone “perfect.” Help the children to think about how someone may be portrayed as “perfect” when in fact they have problems and difficulties like everyone else.

Use the examples as an illustration of how stereotypes can sometimes be wrong.

Also useful for: UE, FP

Activity 3:

Note: teachers might find this video useful preparation for delivering this session:

www.inspiringthefuture.org/redraw-thebalance

Explain to the children that the difference between reality and stereotypes can cause discrimination. Describe how you are going to illustrate this by thinking of the way we can stereotype boys and girls. Ask the children to think of ways that this could cause problems:

- It can give us unrealistic ideas about someone else, which might not be fair.
- It can make us think there are things we should be able to do, just because we are a boy or a girl, and we might feel bad if we can't do those things.

- It might make us feel bad if there are things we like doing that the stereotype says we should not like or be good at.

Divide the children into groups. Using sticky notes, ask them to write down as many jobs as they can think of, with one job per note. On a piece of flipchart paper, draw two columns, one headed “jobs done by women” and the other “jobs done by men”. Ask the children to come up and put their sticky notes in what they think is the appropriate column; if they think a job can be done by either gender, put the note across the dividing line between the columns.

Discuss the children’s ideas. Explore why they think a job can be done by only one gender and what the historic or social context for this might be. Then consider the modern context and discuss whether this changes the children’s minds. Link their original ideas to the list of stereotypical ideals noted in activity 1.

Ask if they can think of any jobs that can only be done by a male and any that can only be done by a female. Use internet search engines to find examples that disprove these ideas – for instance images of male nurses and female soldiers (a female soldier, builder and firefighter are shown in Appendix 2).

Also useful for: UE, CF, RR, OR

Activity 4:

Pin up the large “agree” and “disagree” cards on opposite walls of the classroom.

Explain that you are going to read out some statements about men and women (from your prepared list). Ask the children to think about the statement carefully and then go and stand by the notice which most reflects how they feel about the statement.

Ask the children to think about their choice and to explain it to the person next to them, then invite the children to share their views with the group. Discuss the resulting thoughts, feelings and reactions. (Note: this is likely to prove a lively session. The use of a speaking object may help to maintain order and to ensure that all children get a chance to speak. This is a toy or similar item which is passed around the class, and only the child holding it is allowed to speak. Reinforcing the working agreement is also important for this session).

Encourage the children to challenge the ideas and opinions with which they disagree.

Remind them to use their assertiveness skills. Scribe a list of good strategies or phrases children could use for challenging stereotypes, for instance:

- Be polite and assertive.
- Give examples, such as “I disagree because my dad is a nurse and he is really good at his job.”
- Saying things like “I’m afraid I don’t agree with you. I think that a girl can be a great engineer.”

Ensure the children understand the importance of respecting the differences between men and women. This may require sensitive handling if children come from cultures where more traditional gender roles are valued.

Also useful for: FP, UE, CF, RR

Activity 5:

Divide the children into pairs and ask them to identify one way of preventing stereotyping and discrimination. Suggested prompts could be:

- Get to know someone before we form ideas about them.
- Don't just rely on someone's appearance for our ideas about them.
- Remember that everyone is different. In groups, ask the class to create a classroom poster on how to prevent stereotyping to illustrate their responses.

Also useful for: FP, UE, CF, RR

Plenary:

Remind the children what has been learnt:

- What stereotyping is.
- When stereotyping can occur.
- How media can influence and aid stereotyping.
- How to challenge a stereotypical statement.
- Ways of preventing stereotyping and discrimination.

Debriefing activity:

Show the children images of people who have successfully challenged stereotypes, such as Elizabeth Garrett Anderson (Britain's first female doctor) or David Weir, wheelchair athlete.

Explain that these people were not put off by the way other people saw them and that they went on to do the things that they were interested in and passionate about.

Ask the children to think of something they would like to achieve, and how it would feel to do so. Allow a moment's quiet reflection, then close the session.

Differentiation for SEND:

Children with disabilities or learning needs may already have experienced stereotyping.

Asking them to share how this affected them, and how they overcame it, can be a powerful learning tool but ensure that the child is comfortable to discuss these issues before bringing them to their peers' attention. For others with SEN or disabilities, this topic can be an important tool for building their self-esteem and aspirations.

