

Strategy: Stereotyping Headbands

Stereotyping is everywhere, but students don't always recognize this. In an effort to help students realize the work that unconscious stereotyping does, this activity brings students' attention to stereotypes and some of the erroneous judgments people make when they give in to stereotyping. This can be an effective tool, as long as students are guided carefully through the process and reflection after the activity.

Origin:

Gurung, R. A., & Prieto, L. R. (Eds.). (2009). Getting culture: Incorporating diversity across the curriculum. Sterling, VA: Stylus Publishing. (Available in the CTLT Instructional Resource Commons)

Application:

This activity helps students explore stereotypes. These stereotypes may be related to their culture, the discipline, their future work environments, campus/community environments, etc. This will help students explore their own perspectives as well as prepare for a diverse society. The activity seeks to motivate students to rethink their behavior and attitude toward others. Related discussion and reflection opportunities include engaging students through controversial issues and current events.

Directions

Participants wear headbands that provide a label unknown to them. They are asked to mingle and treat one another in a stereotypical fashion based on their unknown label. As the mingling progresses, participants are asked to guess their label based on the way other participants treat them. When they have guessed correctly, they can sit down.

Materials

One labeled, paper headband per participant

Time

In a group of 30 participants, it will take about 10 minutes for everyone to identify his or her label. Allow at least 15 minutes to debrief. An extended debrief could include a writing or speaking assignment.

Possible labels (*Labels will vary widely based on the intent of the activity.*)

Teenager, Elderly Person, African American, Asian, Middle-Eastern, White, Homeless, Physically/Visually challenged, Gay, Transgendered, Overweight, HIV Positive, Unwed Mother, Democrat, Republican, Tea Party, From a Rural Area, From a Urban Area, Wealthy, International Student, Fraternity/Sorority Member, Football Player, Art Major, etc.

Modifications

---Split participants into two groups: Participants and Observers. Observers watch the interaction and guide the debrief conversation.

---After the participants know their role and have discussed the related stereotypes, have them apply this experience to a discussion of a case study in which stereotypical behavior had serious implications.

---Instead of keeping the role unknown to the participant, reverse the exercise to have the role known only to the participant. Then, facilitate a conversation of a controversial issue or current event and have

