

38. Who's Behind Me?

Who do you think I am?

Themes	General human rights, Discrimination, Media and Internet
Level of complexity	Level 2
Age	10-13 years
Duration	30 minutes
Group size	10-20 children
Type of activity	Guessing game based on stereotypical responses to photographs; discussion
Overview	Children guess the person pictured on their back by the responses of others.
Objectives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To discuss the impact of stereotypes and labelling on individuals and groups of people • To understand the link between stereotyping, prejudice and discrimination • To analyse the role of the media in enhancing stereotypes and prejudice
Preparation	Collect a set of 25 pictures showing people in different countries and settings. Mount the pictures on cardboard. Optional: laminate cards with plastic. Number the pictures.
Materials	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 25 pictures mounted on cardboard • Pins or sticky tape • Paper and pens • Flipchart and marker



Instructions

1. Explain the activity:
 - a. Each of you will have a picture of a person taped on your back.
 - b. Everyone will walk around the room. When you meet someone, look at the picture and say some words that express the general opinion of society about a person like that. This is not necessarily your personal opinion but the labels or stereotypes that people use about this kind of person. These words might be positive or negative and even unkind.
2. Write down the words used for you and try to guess what kind of person you are.
3. Stick a picture on the back of every child without letting him or her see it. Give each child paper and pencil to record the words used.
4. Start the activity, with the children mingling and giving each other words of description. After about ten minutes, bring the group together.
5. Starting with picture number one, ask each child to guess the identify of the person in the picture based on how others have responded. Ask each child to explain their guess. Then ask each child in turn what words were said about the picture and write these words next to the number of the picture.
 - a. After each child has guessed, take off the picture and show it to the group. Discuss each picture briefly:
 - b. Where do you think the person in the picture is?
 - c. What is the person doing?
 - d. Do you see this person enjoying any human rights?

Debriefing and Evaluation

1. Debrief the activity by asking questions such as these:



- a. Was it difficult to find the right words to describe what people say about people like the one in different pictures?
 - b. How did you feel about saying some harsh or unfair words about the person in the picture?
 - c. Was it difficult to guess your picture's identity, based on what people said?
 - d. How did you feel about hearing what people said about the person you represented?
 - e. Were your ideas about the people represented in the different pictures different from the comments you received?
 - f. Were some people unable to guess their photos? Why do you think they found it difficult?
2. Discuss the list of descriptive words and make a link to human rights. Making sure you use the words labelling and stereotyping, and ask questions about the list such as these:
- a. Do you think most people in this community have ever met people like this?
 - b. How do you think they form ideas about people like this? Do they ever change their minds?
 - c. Does anything ever change your mind about a person?
 - d. Why are labels and stereotyping unfair?
 - e. How could labels and stereotyping lead to violations of human rights?
 - f. What do these responses suggest about the way different people see others? Should people all see things the same way?
 - g. Observe that we get many of our ideas about people we don't know from the media (e.g. radio, television). Discuss the role of the media in stereotyping by asking question such as these:
 - h. How do the media present people from other cultures and countries? When they live in their country of origin? When they live in your country?
 - i. How can the media increase labelling and stereotyping?

Suggestions for follow-up

Several other activities also examine stereotypes:

- 'PICTURE GAMES', p. 130 and 'WORLD SUMMER CAMP', p. 205, deal with a variety of stereotypes.
- 'BOYS DON'T CRY', p. 78, and 'ONCE UPON A TIME...', p. 125, address gender stereotypes.
- 'BLINDFOLDED', p. 67, and 'A BODY OF KNOWLEDGE', p. 53, concern stereotypes about children with disabilities.

Ideas for action

- The children can develop and carry out a survey of how other people, children and/or adults, in their community respond to the same pictures. Based on their findings, they can decide how to address stereotypes and prejudice.
- Pick an example of a current event, especially involving people from other cultures and countries, and analyse how newspapers, radio and television present the issues and the people involved. Compare how different media deal with the same story. How are the related human rights issues presented?
- If they have access to cameras, the children can create a photo exhibition of 'Views of Human Rights' or 'Faces of Diversity' in your community.

Tips for the facilitator

- By using different pictures and asking appropriate questions in the debriefing, this activity can be adapted to focus on any human rights theme, e.g. gender equality or poverty and social exclusion.



- The choice of pictures is very important. Collect images from colour magazines, travel brochures, old calendars and post cards. You can also print many from Google images. Be sure that there is no text with any of the pictures, but note the original caption or other information about each picture in order to answer any questions about it.
- To make sure children understand the activity, you may wish to demonstrate with one picture before the activity starts.
- The pictures should show a wide variety of aspects of 'life on earth'; they should include images of individuals and groups, people of different ages, cultures and abilities. There should be pictures in rural and urban settings, of industry and agriculture, people doing different sorts of work and leisure activities, people of different origins, colours, races, and religions. Don't try to put the pictures in any sort of order when you number them.
- Make sure that the pictures that are chosen do not relate too closely to any personal attributes of the children in the group, as this may make them feel uncomfortable or embarrassed.
- Many children will be unable to differentiate between stereotyped responses and their own opinions. Although this activity may challenge them, it may also offer important new perspectives.

Adaptation

- The children will differ widely in their maturity and sophistication, general knowledge of stereotypes and 'visual literacy' skills. Adapt the level of analysis to the abilities of the group.

