

**Overview:**

This lesson will challenge participants to recognize how we sometimes use stereotypes when interacting with others. Learning how to convert stereotypes to generalizations will allow participants to consciously use these flexible principles in their interactions with others.

*Note:* This activity may call up different feelings for different people, and the facilitator should emphasize that participants are only expected to share what they're comfortable with.

**Objectives:**

As a result of this activity, participants will be able to:

1. Distinguish generalizations from stereotypes.
2. Ensure that their own interactions are based on generalizations, not stereotypes.

**Time:**

45 minutes

**Group Size:**

Small Group

**Materials:**

Stereotypes vs. Generalizations video (in [Links](#)) and pen/paper for each group.

**Intercultural Development Continuum Stages:**

- Denial
- Polarization
- Minimization
- Acceptance

**AAC&U Intercultural Knowledge and Competence Goals:**

Cultural Self-Awareness:

- To articulate insights into own cultural rules and biases (e.g., seeking complexity; aware of how their experiences have shaped these rules, and how to recognize and respond to cultural biases, resulting in a shift in self-description).

Openness:

- To initiate and develop interactions with culturally different others.
- To suspend judgment in valuing interactions with culturally different others.

Curiosity:

- To ask complex questions about other cultures.
- To seek out and articulate answers to these questions that reflect multiple cultural perspectives.

## Other Skills:

Teamwork; Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

## Activity Instructions:

1. (10 minutes) Show the [Stereotypes vs. Generalizations video](#).  
Debrief after video: What is the difference between a stereotype and a generalization?  
How might/do you feel when someone interacts with you on the basis of a stereotype?
2. (20-25 minutes) Break into small groups (3-5 people), in person or virtually. Each group should designate a scribe (to notate what is discussed) and a reporter (to report out to the entire group).
  - Each person should identify a common stereotype that is associated with one of their identity groups. The scribe should note these (including their own), on paper, in a Google Doc, or in some other form that can be shared.
  - Members of the group should each consider the stereotype that appears after theirs on the list and convert it to a generalization (the participant whose stereotype is last on the list should convert the first stereotype on the list to a generalization).
  - Together, group members should discuss each stereotype/generalization pair and imagine an interaction based on the generalization. Here are three examples:
    - First-time meeting: John is gay.  
Interaction based on stereotype: "I bet you like clothes shopping and going out to clubs. Do you have any recommendations?"  
Interaction based on generalization: "What are you into? Do you like going out?"
    - Teacher-pupil interaction: Ang is Asian.  
Interaction based on stereotype: "Ang — you're Asian. You should be good at math. You're just not putting in the effort."  
Interaction based on generalization: "Ang — I see you are struggling in math. What do you think the reason is?"
    - Geology field trip: Emma uses a wheelchair.  
Interaction based on stereotype: "You're so brave to come on this trip. Let me help you over this rough terrain!"  
Interaction based on generalization: "What do you think of this trip?"
  - Have the group decide which example elicited the most discussion or proved the most challenging and why. The reporter will share this.
3. (5 minutes) Return to the large group. The reporters should form a fishbowl (see note below). Each reporter should present the example that elicited the most discussion or proved the most challenging in their group and why.

*Note:* For directions on how to use the fishbowl strategy for group discussion, see [Teaching Tolerance's teaching strategy resource](#).



4. (5 minutes) Debrief the whole group using the following questions:

- What happened?
- How did you feel?
- What did you learn?
- So what? Why is it important?
- Now what? Going forward, how will you put what you learned into action?

**Related Tools:**

*Similar tools:*

- [Stereotypes and Generalizations](#)