

Lesson:
Just Because

Length of lesson:
30 Minutes

Materials:

- Pens or pencils
- Pictures or videos promoting common stereotypes
- “Just Because” worksheet

Discussion Summary:

Stereotypes are commonly held beliefs, assumptions, or oversimplifications about

groups or types of people. We all learn stereotypes about gender, race, class, ethnicity, religion, and age from the media, our peers, and families. Stereotypes, whether supported by evidence or not, make it difficult to see people as individuals. Some stereotypes, both positive and negative, get translated into expectations from parents/guardians, teachers, friends, and society as a whole: if, for example, you believe that blondes are not smart, you may not recognize the abilities of a blonde student or push her to succeed since you already believe she won't. Some stereotypes also get internalized: if a blonde student is constantly teased that blondes are not smart, she may begin to believe it and be less motivated in school. Teaching participants about the historical origins of stereotypes, how to think critically, and the importance of seeing people as individuals will help them challenge stereotypes.

Discussion Question:

- **What are some examples of stereotypes?**

1. Begin by asking participants to brainstorm things people think about them based on how they look or because they are part of a certain group, especially things that are not necessarily true. Give examples: “people think I am a trouble-maker because I skateboard” or “people think I am good at math because I am Asian” or “people think I like pink because I am a girl.” If participants say what people think about them without attaching it to a reason, ask them why they think people think that (to get them to say the group it is associated with). Ask participants to share how it makes them feel that people may think that about them if it is not true or even if it is.

2. Explain that the ideas they just brainstormed are stereotypes. Explain that stereotypes are beliefs or oversimplifications about groups or types of people. Give examples of common stereotypes: “blondes are not smart,” “Muslims are terrorists,” “African-Americans like chicken,” “people who are fat are lazy,” “girls can't throw balls,” “people who are gay try to hurt children.” Explain some stereotypes may have evidence to support them, but that does not mean they should be applied to the whole group—it is not true, for example, that ALL blondes are not smart. Remind participants of how they felt when others projected stereotypes onto them—even

though they may be part of that group, they are not how some people assume they are.

3. Explain we learn stereotypes from our families, friends, and the media. Show pictures or videos depicting common stereotypes.

4. Tell participants they will write a poem based on stereotypes about their own identities. In the poem, they will also get to debunk the stereotypes by stating positive traits about themselves.

5. Read example “Just Because” poems.

6. Pass out the “Just Because” worksheets. Give participants ~15 minutes to work on their poems. Assist as necessary.

7. When participants have completed their poems, have them read them aloud. Remind them to practice being confident as they claim their identities.

8. Ask participants what they learned today. Ask them to tell you what they know about stereotypes.

9. Participants can take home their poems or they can be posted in the Girls Only! space.

Just Because

Just because I am _____, I
am not _____
I am not _____
I am not _____
I am _____.

Just because I am _____, I
I am not _____
I am not _____
I am not _____
I am _____.

Just because I am _____, I
am not _____
I am not _____
I am not _____
I am _____.

Just because I am _____, I
I am not _____
I am not _____
I am not _____
I am _____.