

SEL Activity

Challenge a Stereotype



grades 6-8



30 minutes

Objectives

- Understand why challenging stereotypes is important.
- Practice disrupting stereotypes.

Essential Questions

- Why is it important to challenge stereotypes?
- How can we challenge stereotypes?

Vocabulary

Stereotype: noun; a widely-held but fixed and oversimplified image of a particular type of person or thing.

Empathy: noun; the ability to understand and share the feelings of another.

MATERIALS + MEDIA

Video: [Boys Don't Cry \(2:56\)](#)

Worksheet: [Just Because \(PDF | Google\)](#)

Post-its (optional)

Chart paper

SEL CORE COMPETANCIES

Social awareness

Responsible decision-making

Self-management

Social engagement

Before you Begin

- If students need a more complete introduction to stereotypes, consider starting with ThinkGive's SEL Activity: [What is a Stereotype?](#)
- Print the [Worksheet: Just Because \(PDF | Google\)](#) (1/student).

Program Connections

This activity has been modified from a lesson in our ThinkGive Middle School programs. To learn more, visit our [PROGRAMS](#) page.

THINK • GIVE

Ask: What do you think about this statement: “Boys need to be tough and shouldn’t cry.” Do you agree or disagree? Why or why not?

Remain neutral as students discuss.

Watch: [Boys Don’t Cry](#) (2:56). This short film challenges the stereotype that boys aren’t supposed to cry and exposes how this phenomenon stigmatizes normal human emotions.

Discuss:

- What are your thoughts about the video?
 - How did the people seem impacted by the stereotype?
 - Are stereotypes true or are they made up? Explain.
 - Why is it important to challenge stereotypes?
 - Turn to someone next to you and complete this sentence together: “Just because boys cry, doesn’t mean they _____.”
-

CONNECT + CLOSE

Activity: Just Because

Share the definition of a **stereotype** (see vocab). As a class, brainstorm a list of common stereotypes. Examples:

- Poor people don’t work hard.
- Older people are inactive.
- Girls aren’t strong leaders.
- Someone who can’t speak English well isn’t intelligent.
- Someone in a wheelchair is helpless.

Explain that statements starting with “All...” usually indicate a stereotype because they make a generalization or assumption about everyone in a group (e.g., “All boys like sports”).

NOTE: Some students might feel uncomfortable listing stereotypes they have seen or experienced. Explain that sharing about a stereotype does not mean we agree with the stereotype; rather, by honestly and bravely looking at stereotypes we can question or challenge them.

Explain: We all hold stereotypes—it’s a human tendency. It is important to spend time compassionately challenging our stereotypes and those of others. Be careful to challenge the stereotype but not the person doing the stereotyping; it is not a personal attack (although it certainly can feel like it) but an opportunity for all of us to learn and do better.

Hand out the Worksheet: Just Because ([PDF](#) | [Google](#)) (1/student). For this activity, students complete the sentences: “Just because I... doesn't mean I...” and “Just because someone... doesn't mean they...”

Offer the following examples when explaining the activity:

- Just because I am a girl doesn't mean I like pink.
- Just because someone plays sports doesn't mean they are aggressive.

NOTE: To make this activity more active, list the prompts as headings on the whiteboard/chart paper and have students write responses on Post-its and stick them beneath each.

Ask volunteers to share their statements.

Discuss:

- How does the "Just Because" activity help us start challenging stereotypes?
- How can empathy help us to compassionately challenge the stereotyping we notice in ourselves and others?
- How does it feel to question or challenge our stereotypes?
- How does it feel to question or challenge others' stereotypes?
- What is difficult about questioning or challenging a stereotype?
- What are some small (yet brave!) ways to practice getting more comfortable with compassionately challenging stereotypes?

ACTION

Explain: In the coming days/week, practice compassionately noticing when you or others are stereotyping. If you are in a safe environment surrounded by supportive people, practice compassionately challenging a stereotype.

REFLECTION

Lead a discussion or allow students to journal. Use the following questions as a guide:

- How would you think or act differently if you began to notice and challenge stereotypes that you hold?
- How can we start to develop our skills around challenging stereotypes?