



NON-FORMAL METHODS FOR CHANGING STEREOTYPES, INTERACTIONS AND CRITICAL THINKING



In this chapter, we will discuss **prejudice** and the **principles** of changing them. Most **misunderstandings** arise when dealing with such sensitive topics as different cultures or religions, ethnicity, human health, and social situations.



Therefore, in this section, we will discuss how **stereotypes** and **prejudices** function and how they are formed. We hope that by carefully assessing your **preconceptions**, you will be able to better understand what non-formal education methods you can use to establish human rights-based principles in your community.



In our practice, by developing non-formal human rights education sessions, we are always asking participants whether they consider themselves **tolerant** or **guided** by preconceived notions. Most of the participants respond that they consider themselves tolerant and do not follow stereotypes in their daily activities. However, when we are asking to identify social groups for which they consider themselves tolerant and believe that their behaviour ensures equality, social groups such as men and women are usually chosen. In other words, the vast majority of people attending events understand equality only in the context of gender equality.

When starting a **deeper conversation** about stereotypes and prejudices, participants often embarrassed and confused, even feeling attacked.



The ability to distinguish a friend from an enemy helped early humans survive, and the ability to quickly and automatically categorise people is a key feature of the human mind.

Categories give order to life. And we categorise people every day by social or other characteristics. However, this is the basis for stereotypes, prejudice and, ultimately, discrimination.





WHAT IS A STEREOTYPE?



A stereotype is an exaggerated belief, image, or distorted truth about a person or group.

Stereotypes are based on the images created by the media, the reputation transmitted by parents or peers and other members of society. Stereotypes can be positive or negative.





WHAT IS A PREJUDICE?



Prejudice is an attitude towards the group or its individual members. The bias can be positive or negative.

Prejudices are often influenced by ignorance, fear, or hate are shaped by a complex psychological process that begins with attachment to a close, familiar circle, or “group,” such as family. Prejudice is often directed at outside group.





WHAT IS DISCRIMINATION?



Discrimination is a behaviour that causes people to behave unequally because of group membership. Discriminatory behaviour ranges from ignorance to hate crimes, often starting with negative stereotypes and prejudices.

Learned preconceptions resist change, even when the evidence does not support it or suggests otherwise.





THE ROLE OF MEDIA



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Bias is often formed and/or sustained by the media.

The media regularly uses stereotypes as abbreviations or to paint a mood, scene or character. For example, Roma people in Europe are often reported in a negative light, while positive stories are omitted.



Coverage bias when media choose to report only negative news about one group or ideology

Marginalised groups continue to face degrading treatment by shop clerks, co-workers and the police. While a representative of ethnic minorities may dine at a luxury restaurant, they may have difficulty calling a taxi.





Research has revealed that **African-American teens** feel stigmatised as intellectually inferior and go to school with a "**suspicious burden**" (C. Steele). Such a burden can affect their attitudes and achievements. The shadows are constantly hanging on to stigmatised people, no matter what their status or achievements. They need to remain vigilant and take on additional burdens that can affect their self-confidence, and relations with family.





HOW TO CHANGE PREJUDICE?

Recognise that bias is learned early. Anyone who contributes to children's education can lead the child to question their values and beliefs and pay attention to the stereotypes that prevail among peers or broadcast in the media. Children should see and hear about equality as often as possible. It has been observed that children grow up to be more tolerant in loving and supportive families. They feel welcome, accepted, loved no matter what they do. In such an environment, different opinions are welcomed, the punishments are not severe, therefore children from such families usually think positively about other people, feel the desire to treat others well.





HOW TO CHANGE PREJUDICE?

Community. Social integration programs for various groups experiencing social exclusion alone have not been shown to change the attitudes or treatment of vulnerable groups in society. However, many studies show that when people work together in a structured environment to solve common problems, their attitudes toward diversity can change dramatically.

By involving members of different groups in joint activities, people begin to think of themselves as part of a community where everyone has abilities and can make an impact.





It may not be possible to avoid automatic stereotypes or prejudices, but deliberately correcting one's behaviour is certainly possible.

If a person realises that they have a hidden bias, they can monitor and try to change their attitude or behaviour. This competence includes verbal expressions and body language. Looking at the situation from the other end, we see that changed behaviour also changes prejudices. Therefore, we encourage you to expand your circle of friends and get to know other groups in society.



In general, critical thinking is the ability to identify oneself both at the individual and group level and the ability to play an active role in establishing the principles of justice and equality, regardless of group pressure.

To achieve this, everyone must first think about the concepts of **justice** and **equality** - how we perceive them and what are the socially acceptable norms. It is important to assess the ability to do the right thing and what determines the choice of actions and to find ways in which you can resist negative group or societal pressure. And the last step is not only to **act** in accordance with the principles of justice for other people, but also to **make an impact** on the community or society, when the most appropriate tool is non-formal education methods.

I understand!

