

Understanding discrimination

Learning objective

Students play a game to allow them to experience exclusion and then explore and discuss how prejudices develop. They consider a range of scenarios that reflect discrimination of gender and healthy relationships and develop strategies to address these discriminations.

Take Home Messages

- We need to develop respect and appreciation for individual and cultural similarities and differences.
- Prejudice and discrimination are unfair and impact on individuals and communities.
- Prejudice can influence how we make decisions.
- We have choices in these situations and we can choose fair behaviours.
- There are things we can say and do when we witness prejudice and discrimination to show that we accept differences.

Materials

- Student Activity Sheet: I can see prejudice [one scenario per group]

Before You Get Started

- Much of children's play reflects themes they see portrayed in stories and in the media, which often include strong stereotypes and prejudices around gender, race and sexuality. Encourage them to talk about where they receive these messages from.
- If the classroom has a home corner, provide a range of dress ups and toys to allow children to explore different roles and ethnic dress; put up pictures of women and men taking on different household tasks and gender roles in a range of ethnic groups.
- Read books that open up the possibilities about what girls and boys can be or do. Suggested reading:
 - [The Sissy Duckling](#) by Harvey Fierstein
 - [A Proper Little Lady](#) by Nettie Hilton and Cathy Wilcox
- Have students make a list of actions they can take to help the school/class be a safe and welcoming place for all learners. Review these in a subsequent lesson and agree on a short 'contract' that you as a teacher and your students can agree to.

Learning Activities

Whole Class

Students play a game that allows them to experience feelings of inclusion and exclusion and then think about unacceptable reasons for excluding someone from a group.

1. Present the term 'discrimination' and explain to the students that they will be completing a [Y-chart](#) later in the lesson to determine what discrimination looks like, sounds like and feels like.
2. Have students hold hands tightly in a large circle and explain that they are not to let 'the outsiders' into the circle. Ask for 2 volunteers to stand outside the circle and try to get inside the circle. They must wiggle through spaces between people and everyone else must try to keep them out by moving their arms and bodies. Caution students to be gentle when blocking 'the outsiders'. When an 'outsider' gets into the circle, stop the game and the two students standing where the circle was broken (where the outsider snuck through) must now become outsiders.

Repeat this process a number of times, giving each student a turn at being outside the group.

- Draw a [Y-chart](#) on the whiteboard and complete the 'looks like' and 'sounds like' sections.

3. Ask:

- How did it feel to be an outsider?
- Why do you think you were kept out?
- How did you act as an outsider?
- How did you want to act?
- Did anyone want to let the outsiders inside the circle?
- How did you feel when you knew you couldn't let them in?
- Have you ever felt like an outsider in a group?
- How did you feel?
- Should everyone be allowed to be part of every group?
- Can you think of reasons for keeping someone out of a group?
- What sort of reasons may be unacceptable?
- What are the choices we have when we see someone is being excluded in our class? (e.g. ignore the situation, ask for help, do something to include them)
- What can we do in our class to make sure that no one is excluded?
- What can we say when we feel that someone in our class is being excluded?

4. Explain that this activity was intended to help them develop a sense of how it can feel to be outside the group (in the minority), or to feel like they are separate from others. Stress that we can make people feel apart or excluded for a lot of reasons that are unfair, just like the game we played. Complete the 'feels like' section of the Y-chart.

Independent or Small Group

Students explore the idea of prejudice and discrimination and then critically review the impact of discrimination on characters in a range of scenarios relating to gender roles and healthy relationships. Students then develop behaviours/strategies that could be used to deal with each situation.

1. Begin this activity by asking students to identify all the people they can think of who are discriminated against in our society. The students should be able to generate a list that includes people from various cultural backgrounds, people with disabilities, pregnant women, old people, people who don't speak English, people who wear distinctive kinds of dress, people who eat different kinds of food. Whiteboard these suggestions under the heading 'Types of people'.
2. Add a column next to the list titled 'Reasons for discrimination' and have students work in pairs to decide what the main reasons for each group's discriminations are, e.g. language, age, appearance, sex, race. Record the reasons in column 2 on the whiteboard.
 - Review both columns and discuss the possible reasons why these discriminations might exist. Discuss the things that could be done/changed to break down these discriminations.
3. Have students form small groups. Distribute one of the scenario cards from the Student Activity Sheet: I can see prejudice to each group. Ask each group to think about how the character is being discriminated against and how this character might feel.
 - Hear feedback and summarise responses on the whiteboard.
 - As a class, have students:
 - brainstorm actions/words that could be used in each scenario that could overcome or break down the prejudice or show that you support this difference.
 - brainstorm actions/words that might be used in each scenario that might help this prejudice continue to exist.
 - Stress that the first set of actions and words are the best ways to overcome prejudice.

3-2-1 Reflection

Have students choose one of the scenario cards and complete the following unfinished sentence:

Things that need to be changed to stop this type of prejudice are: _____

Things that I could say or do to show that I support this difference: _____