

DEBUNKING STEREOTYPES

MATERIALS |

paper, writing utensils,
internet access or
reference texts

OBJECTIVES | The objectives of this activity are for participants to become more aware of the stereotypes and biases they hold, why they are problematic, and how they can disrupt them in themselves and others. It also provides an opportunity to practice working together as a team.

FACILITATOR INSTRUCTIONS |

Review community norms and preferred language. Remind participants they should make sure not to use discriminatory or oppressive language while doing this activity and that they should be aware of how others might experience their comments.

Introduce the concept of stereotypes

- Ask participants if they know what stereotypes are and to brainstorm definitions.
- Explain that stereotypes are generalizations about a group of people. Sometimes they are true for some of the people in the group but often they are unfair overstatements (or even lies) for many others in the group. Even though stereotypes are often unfair, untrue, or overstatements, they can affect how we feel about ourselves and others and they can impact how we treat each other. Stereotypes are the basis for prejudice, bias, and discrimination—the ideas that some people are less deserving, less smart, or less capable than others.

Invite participants to brainstorm common stereotypes they have heard circulating in their school or community about people from *their own* group. Remind them to remember their norms, dialogue skills, and community visions as naming stereotypes can be hurtful.

Divide participants into groups and assign each group one of the stereotypes (ideally of their choosing) to debunk. Consider breaking participants into groups based on the stereotype they are most interested in debunking, or asking participants to choose a stereotype that affects a group they are NOT members of. For example, if one of the stereotypes is “girls can’t throw balls well” perhaps a group of boys or nonbinary students will work to debunk it.

Instruct participants to find 3-5 pieces of evidence that debunk the stereotypes. Evidence may include a person they know who challenges the stereotype, a research study or news article, a historical figure, data and statistics, etc. Invite each group to share what they learned that debunks the stereotype they were assigned.

DEBRIEF QUESTIONS |

- How did doing this activity make you feel?
- Where do our stereotypes come from?
- How can we work to acknowledge and disrupt the stereotypes we hold?
- Which stereotypes can we now cross off of our list because we know they are not fully true?



SUPPORTING MEDIA |

<https://www.michiganlearning.org/creating-inclusive-spaces/>

NOTES |

It may be important to introduce students to how to find and vet reputable sources, facts versus opinions, and the risks of “fake news.”

WARNING: This activity will likely involve talking to students about race, gender, class, bias, prejudice, stereotypes and other related concepts. Facilitators who have not done a significant amount of their own work in these areas or who do not have the knowledge, skill, or confidence to lead others in these conversations should not lead this activity.