

be  
brave.



## Take Off Your Mask!

Presented by

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“ We create a mask to meet the masks of others. Then we wonder why we cannot love, and why we feel so alone. ”

— Brenda Shohama —

“ ”  
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# How Do We Identify and Label Groups?

Write the word “stereotype” on the board. Ask at least one student to give a possible definition.

Possible Definition: A generalized picture of a person, created without taking the whole person into account; to make a generalization.

Use in Sentence: When we stereotype a group of people, we depict all of the individuals within that group as having the same characteristics.

Break students into groups of five or six and have them complete the attached worksheet entitled “How Do We Identify and Label Groups at our School?” Review the “Jock” example with your students. Ask students if they have any more labels to add to this group. Ask students to complete the rest of the worksheet. Encourage students to talk and work together. **Each student will need a worksheet and a pen or pencil to record their responses.**

## **Check for Understanding**

When the majority has finished their worksheet, solicit student responses to the following questions:

1. Which groups did you identify? (Write them on the board)  
Examples: jocks, gothics, red necks, Emos, drama group, preppy group, Norteños, Sureños, skaters, cheerleaders, aggies, etc.
2. What are some of the labels we associate with these groups? (Write them on the board)
3. What group would you fall under? Do you feel that people misjudge you? Explain.
4. How do labels/assumptions affect your behavior toward others?
5. Which groups get along and which groups do not? Explain.
6. What unites us? What kinds of activities allow groups to interact? (clubs, sports, lunchtime activities, rallies, dances, classroom settings, church, service projects, etc.)
7. Have you ever misjudged someone? What caused you to misjudge that person?  
What made you realize you were wrong . . . that you had misjudged too quickly?

## **Closure**

1. What did you discover today about stereotypes?
2. What harm can come from stereotyping others?
3. What are some recent stories in the news that pertain to stereotyping?
4. What did this lesson help you understand?

*These first two lessons helped us understand the importance of getting to know one another and that we are all unique individuals who cannot be grouped or clumped into one stereotype. We discovered that we have more in common than we thought and that those commonalities should unite us rather than divide us.*



# Acceptance and Rejection Activity



1. Divide students into groups of five or six in each group. Do not let them choose their groups. (If you have students who seem especially withdrawn or isolated, do not put them in Group 1.)
2. Instruct groups to decide upon a secret password **and** a secret handshake that someone must know to join your group. Do not let the other groups know what you have chosen.
3. Give each group their instruction slip. Extra instruction slips may be needed for larger classes. (A master list of instruction slips is included in this packet.)
4. Ask each group to discuss the instructions among themselves. Walk around and make sure each group knows what they will do if someone wants to join their group.
5. Each group should carry out its written instructions without revealing those instructions to anyone from another group—it's important everyone plays by the rules.

## **BEGIN THE ACTIVITY (5 minutes)**

6. Ask students to return to their original seats, and allow a representative from each group to reveal their group's hidden instructions to the class.

### **Check for Understanding** (6 minutes)

1. What did you experience during this activity, and how did it make you feel? (You might want to call on a few students who were not allowed in Group #2 as well as a few others.)
2. Each group had different criteria for inclusion/exclusion. How do we see this play out in our schools and communities?  
Examples: To join a gang, you may have to be jumped in or commit a crime.  
Churches usually welcome everyone who comes through their doors.
3. How do you think others view you and your group of friends? Are you welcoming, intimidating, approachable, closed off? Which group number do you most resemble?

### **INDEPENDENT PRACTICE** (10 minutes)

Have students complete the handout entitled, "Acceptance and Rejection Activity—*My Reflections*." (See attached page.) Have students respond to the prompts. Please answer one of the prompts in front of the class to demonstrate what you expect from them and to put them more at ease.

### **Check for Understanding**

Have students share their responses with a partner. If time permits, call on several students to share their responses with the class (different students for each question).

## **CLOSURE:**

*This lesson helped you talk with students you may never have talked with before. It helped you understand the importance of getting to know one another in order to feel more comfortable with those you may not know very well. You had the opportunity to be in a “group” with its own rules on conduct, and many of you were left out in the cold. You felt unwanted and didn’t like how it felt.*

*You discovered that everyone has felt left out or alone at some point in his/her life and that surprisingly enough, you have probably made people feel that way, too.*

*I hope that after this lesson you will be more aware how you treat others and that you will take the time to meet those you avoid, are scared of, or judge and that you will follow through with the final challenge. That challenge is to go to the person you identified on your reflection sheet and do the one thing you wrote down. If you need to be more encouraging, do it. If you need to be more appreciative, do it. If you need to be nicer, start with a smile. If you need to be more forgiving, have the courage to do it. If you need to be more respectful, start today. If you need to apologize, be the bigger person and say you’re sorry.*

# Instruction Slips for Groups

## Acceptance and Rejection Activity

- GROUP 1:** Due to a change in the rules, we can only have four groups. The members of your group must split up. You each need to go to one of the other groups (Group 2, Group 3, Group 4, and Group 5). You cannot all stay together. You must learn the handshake and password to be accepted into your new group.
- GROUP 2:** Do not let anyone join your group. Do not tell anyone your secret password or show them your secret handshake no matter what!
- GROUP 3:** Allow anyone to join your group who wants to join; however, do not let them join right away. Ask them questions about why they want to join and why they should be allowed in your group. After a minute (if they have answered your questions) share your secret password and handshake with them. Once they have said your password and demonstrated your handshake, accept them into your group.
- GROUP 4:** If others want to join your group, ask them to tell you a few facts about their life. Based on their response, vote however you want. Some of you may vote “no” and some of you may vote “yes.” You do not have to give a reason for your vote. The majority wins. Count the votes—if the majority votes “no,” do not allow them to join your group. If the majority votes “yes,” share your secret password and handshake and accept them into your group after they have said your password and demonstrated your handshake.
- GROUP 5:** If others want to join your group, share your handshake and password with them immediately. Ask them to repeat your password and demonstrate your handshake and then warmly welcome them into your group. Make everyone feel accepted and appreciated. Make sure they know how glad you are that they chose to join your group.

# Acceptance and Rejection Activity

## *My Reflections*

1. What can this activity teach us about groups or cliques? \_\_\_\_\_

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2. Write about an incident when you felt left out or alone. \_\_\_\_\_

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3. Write about an incident when you made someone else feel left out or alone.

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4. Why do you think we put others down, bully them, ignore them, or hurt them with our actions and words when we know how bad it makes us feel when others treat us that way?

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5. Choose one person you could treat better. Write at least one thing you could do to be more encouraging . . . to be more appreciative . . . to be nicer . . . to be more forgiving . . . to be more respectful . . . to be more apologetic for the way you have treated him/her? (Mother, father, friend, brother, sister, enemy, teacher, neighbor, grandparent, etc.)

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*. . . so, what's stopping you?*

## **What Can Santa Teach us About Stereotypes?**

OBJECTIVE: Students will find they impose stereotypes based solely on how someone dresses.

I was not able to digitally transfer this lesson; however, I was able to copy it and include it in my Meet the Pros handout. If you would like to access this powerful lesson and get the two images you will need for this activity, type in the following URL:

[http://www.tolerance.org/sites/default/files/documents/tt\\_holiday\\_stereotype.pdf](http://www.tolerance.org/sites/default/files/documents/tt_holiday_stereotype.pdf)



# SERIOUS QUESTIONS

1. What do you dislike about high school?
2. If you could travel anywhere in the world, where would it be and why?
3. If you could be an animal, what would it be and why?
4. When you want some alone time, where do you like to go and why?
5. If you could meet anyone (living or dead), who would it be and why?
6. Have you ever felt or known any student afraid to come to school because of fear of their safety?
7. Do you feel like you are fully living your high school experience? Why or why not?
8. Where do you see yourself in the future?
9. What is stopping you from achieving something you want?
10. Who can you turn to when you have a problem?
11. Can you be yourself in high school or do you feel like you keep the REAL YOU hidden?
12. Have you given into peer pressure? If so, please explain.
13. Have you ever made fun of someone about their appearance? If so, what did you say?
14. What really makes a positive difference in your life?
15. If there is anything in your life that you could change, what would it be?
16. When was a time that you failed at something? What was it and why?
17. What do you believe is the most important thing in your life and why?
18. What is the best thing and/or worst thing about your family?
19. When was there a time/event in your family that was difficult to deal with?
20. If you could eliminate one thing in your life so that you never had to do it again, what would it be?
21. If you were to perform in the circus, what would you do?
22. What is the weirdest food you have ever eaten?

# Cross the Line

This activity is extremely emotional and powerful and should be conducted only after an extensive amount of time has been devoted to the topics of stereotyping, understanding one another, appreciating our differences, sharing our stories, being honest as possible, etc.

Students stand in two lines (facing each other) on opposite sides of the gym or large room. When each question is read, students cross to a pre-determined “line” (at least 12 feet in front of them) if that statement is true for them. Obviously, they do not have to cross, but they are given the freedom to cross and to be honest. There is absolutely no talking, but you may want to play some soft music in the background. After they cross the line, wait a few seconds and say, “Cross back.” They quietly walk back until the next question is read.

On some questions you may want to pause longer after they’ve crossed the line and ask the students to look around the room . . . to see who else crossed the line . . . to see who shares that aspect of their life with them . . . to notice who didn’t cross.

Encourage students who DO NOT cross the line to reach out their arm with outstretched hand (when they feel led) to let students know they acknowledge their hurt or struggle and to let them know that they are there for them. It’s a sign of encouragement, love, and concern.

Be sure to have plenty of tissue and time for a powerful follow-up discussion. Students will realize they are not alone, that they are surprised that certain students crossed on specific questions, that they had misjudged others, that it’s alright to be honest and to let others know your life is not perfect.

## Possible Questions

Cross the line if you’re still friends with some of your friends from elementary school.

Cross the line if you play sports.

Cross the line if you have driven without a valid driver’s license.

Cross the line if you have ever had a crush on someone in this room.

Cross the line if you have ever done something behind your parents’ back and didn’t get caught, but you still feel bad about it.

Cross the line if you were not born in the U.S.

Cross the line if you are an only child.

Cross the line if you have earned a semester GPA of 3.5 or higher while in high school.

Cross the line if you live with a single parent.

Cross the line if you have ever felt pressured to fit in the Lady Flower or Man Box.

Cross the line if you have ever been affected by an eating disorder.

Cross the line if you are adopted.

RAISE your hand if you have never met your biological mother or father.

Cross the line if your self esteem is not where you want it to be.

Cross the line if you need to apologize or forgive someone in this room.

Cross the line if you have ever lost a close friend or family member.

Cross the line if you have ever been bullied or harassed at school.

RAISE your hand if YOU have ever bullied someone.

Cross the line if you've given into peer pressure to do something you really didn't want to do.

Cross the line if you've felt like you never fit in.

Cross the line if you know someone who is a drug addict or alcoholic.

RAISE your hand if that person lives in your home.

Cross the line if you have a loved one in prison.

Cross the line if a family member continually puts you down.

Cross the line if you have ever taken any prescription drug to feel better about yourself.

Cross the line if you have been or are currently a foster child.

Cross the line if you've ever gotten into a physical fight.

Cross the line if your parents are divorced and from time to time it hurts you inside.

Cross the line if you've had friends that talk bad about you behind your back.

RAISE your hand if YOU have ever talked bad about someone you know.

Cross the line if you are in fear of not passing the CAHSEE or not graduating.

Cross the line if you look in the mirror and always point out the flaws about yourself.

Cross the line if you have ever driven while intoxicated.

Cross the line if you don't tell your friends everything because you feel that they will judge you in a negative way.

Cross the line if you have ever stood up for someone else.

Cross the line if you have ever cheated on homework or on a test.

Cross the line if you are the oldest child in your family and you want to set a good example for your younger brothers and sisters.

RAISE your hand if you feel you haven't been the good example you had hoped to be.

Cross the line if you are no longer friends with your former best friend, and you just wish they would stop saying bad things about you because you haven't done anything against them.

Cross the line if you have ever run away from home.

Cross the line if you have ever been in an abusive relationship.

Cross the line if your parents have given up on you and hearing them say that kills you inside but you won't let that show.

Cross the line if you have ever considered taking your own life.

Cross the line if your parent's finances are in jeopardy and it's hard to make it month to month.

Cross the line if you truly believe that you have no close friends. There's no one that comes to your mind when you want to socialize or just talk. You feel completely alone.

Cross the line if one of your parents or relatives has ever sold drugs or has done drugs in front of you and you resent them for it.

Cross the line if you would ever go back and change a mistake you made because you still feel badly about it.

Cross the line if you feel like your parents don't believe in your dreams.

Cross the line if you have witnessed something you wish you had never seen.

Cross the line if you feel the only way to have fun or get through the day is with drugs or alcohol.

Cross the line if you already have a child.

Cross the line if you feel unhappy but you still come to school with a smile on your face just to put up a front.

Cross the line if you have a loved one struggling with cancer or a serious illness.

Cross the line if you have lost a loved one because of gang violence.

Cross the line if you dread going home every day.

Cross the line if you believe that you can make a positive difference in someone else's life.

RAISE your hand if that person is in this room.

Cross the line if you have met someone today and have a completely different view of them now.

*In some instances, you may want to have counselors on hand for follow-up intervention.*