First Thoughts

Objective

The purpose of this activity is to have participants examine the stereotypes of the groups of people with whom they interact. They should recognize that stereotyping is unfair and becomes a barrier to good communication as accepting people as individuals. Additionally, participants will gain a better understanding of themselves.

Time

30 minutes

Materials

Pens, notepads, slide with list of names (see page two)

Procedures

1. Display the slide and ask participants to write down two or three adjectives that come to mind for each group listed (positive or negative).
2. Divide the participants into groups of three and give them several minutes to discuss their reaction to the exercise and stereotyping in general. Which words were the most difficult to comment on? Participants have reported difficulty with the terms “white” and “disabled”, saying they were difficult to comment on.
3. Discuss other stereotype groups that which participants may belong to: athletic, blonde, smokers, elderly, overweight, rich, etc. Into which groups have you been stereotyped and how has that affected your life?

Conclusion

Discuss the importance of overcoming labels and stereotypes and ask the group for specific ways to counteract stereotypes. For example:

- Recognize stereotypes for what they are and where they come from
- Look at each person as an individual
- Remain open minded and not influences by others opinions
- Examine your own implicit biases and why they exist
First Thoughts

DISABLED  WHITE
BISEXUALS  GAYS
NEW YORKERS  WOMEN
MEN  LATINOS
TRANSGENDERED  ASIANS
POLICE OFFICERS  CALIFORNIANS
AFRICAN-AMERICANS  LESBIANS
TEACHERS  TRANSEXUALS