



LESSON 1

Awareness Down With Stereotypes

❖ READ THIS FIRST

- This lesson includes an overview of the entire unit. It will help the students to get the “big picture” and understand the unit’s goals and activities.
- The lesson also introduces individual and/or group service-learning projects that the students will plan and complete as part of the unit. Please read the teacher note about the project carefully in order to help the students prepare for it. Student projects will vary widely. They can be one of the most rewarding aspects of students’ participation in *SO Get Into It*.
- Make sure to preview the video *Nick News Special Edition: A World of Difference* from Nickelodeon showing school-aged Special Olympic athletes and typical peers from the 2001 Global Youth Summit in Anchorage, Alaska, engaged in honest and candid discussions about this subject. Also preview *Changing Attitudes – One Person at a Time*, from the 2003 Global Youth Summit highlighting the young people in discussions with Nelson Mandela, Colin Farrell and other notables.

❖ LESSON AT A GLANCE

- Introduce the unit, the concept of mental retardation, Special Olympics, and the culminating activity.
- Present and discuss the definition of “stereotype.”
- Discuss examples of stereotypes.
- Have students make a commitment to avoid stereotypes in the future and respect people as individuals by taking pieces of paper on which categories of stereotypes have been written and then literally tearing them into pieces and discarding them.

❖ ON YOUR MARK

Goal



To encourage students to avoid preconceived ideas or beliefs about groups of people or individuals based upon stereotypes and to identify how stereotyping individuals or groups can be detrimental to oneself and others.

Objectives

Students will be able to:

- Define “stereotype”;
- State reasons why people may stereotype others;
- Identify problems arising from stereotyping others and benefits of avoiding stereotyping;
- Identify and practice ways to avoid stereotyping.

❖ GET SET

Teacher Preparation

From the curriculum:

- Outline of *SO Get Into It* lessons.

Audio-visual equipment and other materials:

- Several letter-sized sheets posted on the classroom walls with masking tape or push pins, each one listing a category of stereotype (see Steps 10-12);
- Sheets of blank letter-sized paper on which students can write additional categories of stereotypes;
- Felt-tip markers;
- Masking tape or push pins to post paper in designated area.
- Optional video: *Nick News Special Edition: A World of Difference* (total running time: 22 min.);
- Optional video: *Changing Attitudes – One Person at a Time* (total running time: 46 min., however is divided into two parts – Part I with Nelson Mandela, 19:00 minutes; Part II with the MTV Colin Farrell crowd, 27 min.).

❖ GO

Instruction



1. Tell the students:

This is the beginning of a unit about understanding and accepting differences in others. To do that, we'll learn about people with mental retardation* who participate in Special Olympics.

Ask:

Who in our class has heard of Special Olympics? What do you know about Special Olympics and people with mental retardation?

Emphasize that the unit will offer information that will answer students' questions.

Continue by saying:

Special Olympics is a lot like the regular Olympics, but it was developed for people who have mental retardation. Until Special Olympics was started in 1968, they had few opportunities to participate in sports. Now, through Special Olympics, they can take part in a variety of sports competitions and lead happier, healthier lives. We'll conclude the unit with a project that will benefit Special Olympics athletes and help them to succeed.

Teacher note: See the Teacher Resources section for more information about mental retardation and Special Olympics. Definitions and discussion of both are highlighted in Lesson 2.

Optional: You may wish to post the outline of the lessons and briefly summarize them to clarify further what the students will learn and do in the unit. If you post this outline, you may wish to refer to it throughout the unit.

Lesson 1: Awareness

Down With Stereotypes

Understanding and avoiding stereotypes of others

Lesson 2: Understanding

The Loretta Claiborne Story

* The term "mental retardation" is widely used within the Special Olympics movement. You may wish to substitute another term more appropriate to your state or community, such as "intellectual disability" or "developmental delay."



How a Special Olympics athlete overcame her disabilities and went on to triumph, both as an athlete and as a person

Lesson 3: Inspiration
Going for the Goal

How Special Olympics athletes succeed by setting and achieving goals – and how you can, too

Lesson 4: Action
Making Connections With Special Olympics in the School and Community

Carrying out a class project to benefit Special Olympics athletes

*Teacher note: A key to the success of **SO Get Into It** will be the service-learning project at the end of the unit. It's important to become familiar with the types of projects you and your students may complete. To do this, read through all the lessons and, in particular, the projects and activities described in Lesson 4. You will take the lead in determining the scope and nature of the project. This will depend to a great extent on the time and resources you have to complete it (for example, assistance from physical education teachers, local Special Olympics staff, or volunteers). Keep in mind that it's better to try a small project you and your students can complete successfully than one that may be overly ambitious.*

In addition to the brief projects included in Lesson 4, all of which can be completed within a single class period, the lesson can be used as the starting point for a variety of school and community service-learning projects based on the Activity Cards included in this kit. If you decide to do one of the Activity Card projects in class, you will need to allow for additional class periods. The projects could also be completed outside of class as homework or extra-credit assignments.

It is especially important to determine what type of project the class will undertake before you begin teaching the lessons. Ideally, the decision about the project would be made jointly by you and the students. If time allows, you may wish to offer the class a variety of project ideas and give students an opportunity to choose from among several projects. You may also decide to have students complete several projects simultaneously, working in small groups.



2. Introduce the class project to the students. Describe whatever initial steps the class might need to take in order to begin thinking about how to complete the project.

*Teacher note: Since the project will differ from one class to another, no specific instructions are included here for organizing and completing it. See Lesson 4 for additional details. A continued focus on the project should be a highlight of each **SO Get Into It** class. You may wish to set aside part of each class for a brief update on the project, and you may wish to begin by making specific project assignments that students will complete outside of class. If, however, you decide to do a brief project in class as part of Lesson 4, it will be sufficient to remind the students about the project and encourage them to think of creative ways to complete it when the time comes.*

3. Focus the learner.

Ask:

Why is fairness important? Why is respect for others important? What would the world be like if no one cared about fairness or respect for others? How do you think people feel when they're treated unfairly or when they're not respected?

Explain:

The class will focus during this lesson on something most people agree can be extremely unfair and disrespectful: stereotypes.

4. State the lesson objectives. Display them on an overhead, chart paper, or the board.

5. Explain:

Sometimes we're powerless to change things that are unfair. But we aren't powerless to change unfair and disrespectful stereotypes of others.

6. Define "stereotype": a statement about someone or something based on a narrow and superficial idea.

Explain:



The word “stereotype” comes from a 19th-century form of printing in which a printer could create the same words or images over and over again without any variation. Like typewritten words on a printing press, a stereotype is an idea that is repeated over and over again to the point where people accept it as true, even if it has little or no connection to reality.

7. Give one of the following examples of a stereotype.

Stereotypes of people: Sometimes people judge other people on the basis of just one thing about them: for example, the way they look, the way they talk, where they live, or how they dress.

Stereotypes of animals, e.g., wolves: The wolf is often viewed only as a vicious and fearsome animal (“the big, bad wolf who will blow your house down”). Wolves are animals that prey on other animals, but the stereotype ignores many other things about wolves: their high degree of intelligence and the way they live and hunt together in highly organized packs, for example. The stereotype of the big, bad wolf is narrow and superficial. It tells only part of the truth about wolves.

Ask the students to volunteer other examples of stereotypes.

Ask:

Where do stereotypes come from? (They’re conveyed through stories, pictures, or the media; sometimes people judge other people unfairly just because they speak or differently or look different.)

Ask:

What are some reasons why stereotypes are unfair? (They may have little connection with the reality; they don’t take account of individual differences within groups; they’re often based on very little information or misinformation.)

Ask:

8. Explain that it’s not uncommon for people to have stereotypes of other people and of groups. Ask:

What are some problems that stereotypes can lead to?



Encourage a variety of answers such as:

- People judge others unfairly without getting to know what they're really like.
- Stereotypes are often associated with prejudice and discrimination against others.
- Some people get excluded from groups because of stereotypes about the group they represent.
- People may use the stereotype of a group as a reason for behaving in a mean and hateful way toward that group.

9. Point out the sheets you have posted on the walls and explain that each one describes a common category of stereotypes. Ask the students if they can think of any other categories that should be posted as well.

Possible categories include:

- Stereotypes about people who look different
- Stereotypes about countries
- Stereotypes about places
- Stereotypes about ethnic groups
- Stereotypes about teenagers
- Stereotypes about people with disabilities
- Stereotypes about the elderly

10. Say:

Look at all these different kinds of stereotypes. For every category of stereotype, there are people who believe the stereotype and who use it to justify unfair, disrespectful, insensitive, prejudiced, or hateful behavior.

11. Explain:

You will now have an opportunity to tear down these stereotypes and make a commitment to avoid them in the future.

Demonstrate by removing one of the sheets from the wall, tearing it into small pieces, and putting the pieces in a paper-recycling container. As you do so, offer a brief statement of your commitment to discard stereotypes and "recycle" them into more positive and accepting attitudes toward others.



Examples:

- **I'm through with stereotypes.**
- **Down with stereotypes and into the recycling bin.**
- **Up with positive attitudes that respect individual differences.**

12. Encourage student volunteers to remove the other sheets from the wall (one at a time), tear them into small pieces, and make a similar statement of commitment about avoiding stereotypes in the future.

❖ **FINISH**

13. Either as homework or in class, have each student, working individually, write a paragraph describing the effects of stereotypes on our society and ways to avoid stereotypes.

14. View the video *Nick News Special Edition: A World of Difference* and/or *Changing Attitudes – One Person at a Time* as a class activity to see and hear school-aged students with and without mental retardation discussing this topic openly (*World of Difference* originally aired in March 2001 on Nickelodeon). These videos will also be included with the Youth Summit in Activity Card Level 3, number 5.

15. To save time during class, you may also wish to assign as homework one or more of the student reading handouts for Lesson 2.

❖ **Core Curriculum Extensions**

Reading/Language Arts

Have the students read stories or articles that focus on the negative effects of stereotypes. Encourage student volunteers to report to the class about their reactions to what they read and how stereotypes were dealt with in the article or story.

Organize a classroom project to document ways in which works of fiction about animals have affected people's attitudes toward that particular species – and how such attitudes, closely associated with stereotyping, can change. The publication of *Jaws*, for example, and then the film version, created a deep fear of sharks in many people. Yet many sharks are harmless, today the species is threatened, and the author of *Jaws*, Peter Benchley, is helping to lead a



worldwide crusade to save sharks. *Moby Dick* portrayed whales as vengeful creatures, but today whales are admired for their intelligence and gentleness.

Organize a classroom discussion in which students analyze how stereotyping of others affects groups and friendships in the school and community.

Have the students create posters and slogans discouraging others from basing their views of other people on stereotypes.

History/Social Science

Have the students research examples either in history or in contemporary society in which stereotyping of groups of people led to problems in society. Encourage the students to report to the class on their findings.

Organize a classroom debate on the following topic: "Resolved: Stereotypes about other people are part of human nature, and there is nothing we can do about them."