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**ABOUT STEREOTYPES, PREJUDICE AND DISCRIMINATION**

Prejudice is when we judge before seeing the facts, or hold an opinion when the facts tell us differently. Stereotypes are hardened views often linked with prejudice. For example, there is a common stereotype in North America that Polish people are below average intelligence. Although research shows that intelligence does not vary between cultural groups, many North Americans persist in holding a stereotype that is very harmful to Polish people.

Other statements are more difficult to recognize as stereotypes:

"Teenagers are irresponsible." "Indians are drunks." "Teachers are unfair." Are these stereotypes? Many stereotypes have a grain of truth.

For example, teenagers as they grow older are given additional responsibilities which they sometimes do not want, or have trouble handling. Native Indians, because of the destruction of their culture and means of living, as a group have a rate of alcoholism higher than any other ethnic group.

Similarly, teachers must deal with a large number of people each day and find it difficult to be fair with each situation they encounter. But we do not always take these reasons into consideration and often make exaggerated statements--stereotypes. It is unfair and not always accurate to say "teachers are..., Indians are..., teenagers are..."

Why do we make prejudicial statements about other people? Why do stereotypes so often include negative names for groups?

Stereotypes are often designed to put the person who holds the stereotypes above the person being stereotyped. If you label one group stupid, it makes you appear to be smarter; or if you call someone dirty, it makes people think you are clean. Stereotypes are usually made by those who have a need to feel better about themselves than they feel now.

Stereotypes are also used to keep groups down socially or economically. If we want to deny blacks an equal education, we call them stupid. If we want to keep women from taking particular jobs we stereotype them as emotional, weak, or unmechanical. If we want to deny teenagers freedom, we can call them irresponsible. If we do not want to listen to the elderly we can stereotype them as senile. Stereotypes are used as effective weapons against groups of people.

Perception -----------> Judgement -----------> Action

(Stereotype) (Prejudice) (Discrimination)

Seeing and judging someone through only a partial or simplified picture and from that perception, judging a person or a group as inferior is prejudice. Prejudice is: action of behaviour based on prejudiced feelings. That kind of behaviour, such as restriction on housing, jobs, or education and denying the same basic rights is called discrimination.

RACIAL DISCRIMINATION is when we avoid a person or group because of a prejudiced judgement based on race. If we find ourselves avoiding a conversation or a discussion with a person because of their racial background, this is prejudice that makes us discriminate against that person.

When we deny a person or group equal access, equal opportunities, and participation in the same general things and privileges others enjoy freely, this is discrimination.

*Adapted From: Look again, The Process of Prejudice and Discrimination; Morton & McBride.*