



TIP OF THE WEEK

Prejudices

Each of us is unique with our own talents and skills and experiences to offer. There are many ways that people can be different from you:

- moral or spiritual beliefs
- cultural background
- intellectual strengths and weaknesses (e.g. being better at languages or math)
- social skills and preferences (e.g. being shy instead of outgoing)
- tastes, interests and hobbies (e.g. liking sports or music)
- physical features (e.g. sex, size, skin color, body shape)
- sexual and/or gender orientation or preferences

While we all benefit by being surrounded by people with different beliefs, skills and experiences, these differences can sometimes cause people to be targets of hatred and prejudice.

To understand what prejudice is, it's important to be able to define words like stereotypes and discrimination. Prejudice can have some serious effects, but there are many things you can do to recognize and reduce prejudice in your own life.

Definitions and Examples

- **Stereotypes are generalizations**

When we assume that people of shared physical, religious, cultural or other characteristics have certain behavioural attributes, this is called a stereotype. Some examples of stereotypes are:

- Men are more adventurous than women
- Women are more emotional than men
- Aboriginal people are all alcoholics
- Gay men are all effeminate

- **Prejudice is a belief**

Prejudice is often based on stereotypes. It divides people into inferior and superior groups based on what one person thinks about another person or group. Some examples of prejudice are:

- **Racism or Anti-Semitism** – believing that race, skin color or culture makes certain people inferior (e.g. believing that whites are superior to people of color or people who practice Judaism)
- **Classism** – believing that certain economic classes are superior (e.g. the rich are superior to the poor)
- **Sexism** – believing that sex and gender determine status (e.g. boys and men are superior to girls and women)
- **Lookism** – believing that appearance and looks determine status (e.g. “unattractive” people are inferior to “attractive” people)
- **Homophobia/Heterosexism** – believing that sexual or gender orientation makes one group inferior (e.g. heterosexual people are superior to homosexual people)
- **Ableism** – believing that physical and/or mental ability makes one group superior (e.g. that differently abled people are inferior to typically abled people)
- **Ageism** – believing that age determines status (e.g. adults are superior to young people and the elderly)

- **Discrimination is an action**

When people act based on their prejudices, they are discriminating against others. Some examples of discrimination include:

- A rich-looking person getting served before a poorer-looking person at a restaurant
- A woman getting turned down for a job promotion in favor of a man
- A police officer keeping a closer watch on a black teenager than a white teenager hanging out in front of a store
- A woman in her 30's getting treated better than a woman in her 70's by a store's staff



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The Effects of Prejudice

Prejudice and discrimination are harmful behaviours that limit the opportunities of certain groups of people by reducing or withholding access to people defined as inferior and by increasing or extending access to people defined as superior.

Some of the opportunities that prejudice and discrimination limit include:

- approval and popularity
- rights and privileges
- power
- knowledge
- employment
- promotion

Prejudice and discrimination also leave people open to a variety of social risks including:

- victimization (violence, abuse, theft and bullying)
- suspicion (blame or assumed guilt for crimes and harmful actions)
- rejection, alienation and isolation (which all can lead to low self-esteem, self-hatred and self-destruction)
- exploitation and oppression

One of the worst things about prejudices is that over time people may come to believe what they hear and may start to believe that they are superior/inferior. This can lead to:

- emotional suffering
- reduced self-esteem
- sense of futility or lack of control
- blaming victims
- losing hope in the future
- fear/mistrust of others
- lack of respect for authority

What Can You Do About Prejudice

There are many ways that you can help reduce prejudice and discrimination. Here are just a few suggestions:

- refuse to laugh at racist or sexist jokes
- refuse to be allowed to jump ahead in a line-up and point out that people who have been waiting longer have a right to be served first
- refuse to see movies, read books, play video games or participate in activities that promote violence or discrimination against certain groups
- confront your friends or peers who express prejudiced or discriminatory beliefs
- support associations or organizations whose mission is to help address the roots or effects of prejudice
- confront prejudice in schools by working with a diverse group of people
- confront prejudice at work by refusing to work in an environment that supports discriminatory policies or practices

If you have information regarding a crime, contact Protective Services at 780-471-7477. If you wish to remain anonymous, contact Crime Stoppers at 1-800-222-TIPS (8477). Your identity will remain anonymous, and if the information you provide leads to a conviction, you could be eligible for a reward of up to \$2000.00.

Everybody benefits, except the criminal.