

The Heart

Objective: To understand how assumptions hurt us
To understand how assumptions separate us from each other.
To understand the individual impact of oppression

Time: 60 minutes **How Many:** 15-30 Middle/High School

Materials: Post-it notes (5-10 per student), Signs with different identities on them—see list for suggestions, visual of the shape of a heart, class set of small hearts, copies of facilitator questions

Source: “Helping Teens Stop Violence”

Enroll: Post-It Notes
[Note: As it can be overwhelming to do this activity, I recommend using only 1-4 ‘categories’ of identities to do it with, instead of using ALL ways of identifying]

Hand 5-10 post-it notes to each student.
Point out that around the room are a variety of ways people identify themselves or are identified by others.
Have them look around the room at each posted identity.

Ask students to think about what have they heard people say about people in these groups? (Do not take answers from the class.)
What do people think or ASSUME about people in this group?
What are people in this group “supposed to” act like, dress like, be like, look like, etc? What names would someone in this group get called?

WHILE REMAINING IN THEIR SEATS, they should write down ONE thing on each post-it that they have heard someone say about one of the identities on the wall. (Only one comment per post-it.) On the back side, they should write the identity name

If they haven’t heard of the group, write down something like a ? mark or “who are they?”, etc. They can write multiple post-its for a single identity or for many identities.

Example: “For Women, I might put the word Ho because I hear women called that .” So on my post-it, I would write “Ho” on the front side (not sticky) and “Women” on the back (sticky) side. Or “for Gay, I might put Maricón, because I just heard someone say

that the other day.” Or “for Asian, I might put Smart or Speaks Chinese, etc.

What you write can be ‘good’ or ‘bad,’ but it should be something people say or ask or think or assume about people in that group. Once they have written ALL their post-its, they can get up and place each post-it on the appropriate sign (you can demonstrate this). Even if someone has already posted what they have written, they should still post it up in that space. They should put it ON the piece of paper itself, not on the wall around it.

As students go around the room, note on post-it notes what THEY say at different group names (like... “What is THAT?!”) and place that up in the corresponding group area. It is good for the teacher to do this themselves, writing the things that students may be unwilling to write down but are common.

Have students return to their seats. Tell them you will come back to these post-its later.

Do/Experience: Hand out individual hearts to each student.

Imagine a newborn baby. As you think of this baby, think of the qualities that babies are born with. What are babies like? What are some adjectives that describe them and their personality?

As they think of words, they should write them on their heart. Give them 2-3 minutes to write as many qualities as they can on their heart.

While they are write, coordinator should take down the signs, piling the post-its for each sign on that sign, with all the “repeats” together. You will later be reading these out, so it is helpful to read what students have said beforehand (and sometimes editing as needed).

Put up big visual of a heart. Ask a student to come up to be a writer. Ask students to share qualities. As they say things, student writes these qualities inside the heart. Keep going until the heart is full of words.

If students mention PHYSICAL qualities, reframe them into characteristics. For example, if they say babies cry, ask why they cry---because they are dependent on others, etc. If students don’t mention it, add loving, honest and anything else you think should be on there.

Say: We believe that all people starts out this way—that we all have all these qualities. That we are all (read the qualities from the chart)

Adding Post-It Statements: Using the categories from the post-it’s, go through each identity, as you read from the post-it, put it on the heart.

Example: Now imagine this baby grows up and is now a 16 year old boy....this boy might hear that he can't cry, that he should have a girlfriend, he should play sports, etc.

Continue until you have finished with all the identities that were around the room. If there is an identity that has nothing on it, mention that this identity is invisible.

Process 1: What do you notice?
What has happened to the heart?
What has happened to the qualities of the baby?

Label 1: The post-its represent scars on our heart. They make it hard to see the good qualities that we all started with. The good qualities are still there, but they get harder and harder to see.

So we get tired of getting hurt, and we put up shields to protect ourselves.
(draw lines around the heart as shields)

Process 2: What are some things that people do to protect themselves? (Write what people say along the barriers.)
If they don't mention it, some shields include living up to the stereotype, acting out against it, being harder on people in your own group, oppressing others in your own group, oppressing others outside of your group, using drugs, being violence, self-violence, etc

How easy is it to see the qualities of a baby? How does this effect us?
How does this help create the isms? How does it keep oppression going?

Label 2: The shields keep us from getting hurt. They also prevent anyone from seeing or getting to know the real you—all of those qualities are blocked. When we meet people and get to know them, we see their shields, and not the real them. As a result, we are divided against each other. This is how oppression affects us at an individual level.

Demonstrate: Sharing in Small Groups

Divide into groups of 4-6 to give people a chance to talk to each other. Each group should pick a facilitator.

Everyone will have 2 minutes to share about how they have been impacted by discrimination. Speak from yourself. Tell a story about how YOU have been affected—by things that have happened to you, your friends, strangers or things you notice in your community. During your time, you get to speak and others get to listen. Do not ask the speaker questions or interrupt them.

(Each facilitator gets a copy of the questions. People can talk or respond to any of these questions. Facilitators, keep the conversations going):

How have I been discriminated against?
What can someone do to help in these situations?

If there is time, ask these two questions for all to answer:
How have I been a part of keeping discrimination going?
What could I do to change this?

When all the groups gone, get the whole group together.

What did you notice in your group?
What can someone do to help? Write down what everyone says.

Review: Share one thing that you will do to prevent the individual effects of oppression.

Celebrate: Take your copy of your individual baby heart and keep it with you as a reminder of how we all start.

Post-It Categories:

This is not a comprehensive list of categories currently used within the U.S. but they are examples. Please use whatever categories that seem right for your purposes.

RACE

ASIAN/ ASIAN-AMERICAN [Could split into South Asian, etc.]
PACIFIC ISLANDER/ FILIPINO
ARABIAN/ ARABIAN DESCENT/ ARAB-AMERICAN/MIDDLE EASTERN
LATINO/ CHICANO/HISPANIC
AFRICAN DIASPORA/AFRICAN-AMERICAN/BLACK
NATIVE AMERICAN/ INDIGENOUS/FIRST NATION
CAUCASIAN/ WHITE/EUROPEAN DESCENT
MIXED RACE/BIRACIAL/MULTIRACIAL

RELIGION

MUSLIM
HINDU
BUDDHIST
CHRISTIAN
JEWISH
JAIN
TAOIST
AGNOSTIC
ATHEIST
WICCAN
SPIRITUAL

CLASS

POOR
WORKING CLASS
MIDDLE CLASS/ "OWNING CLASS"
WEALTHY/RICH

ABILITY

PERSON WITH A DISABILITY (LEARNING, MENTAL, OR PHYSICAL)
ABLE-BODIED

SEXUALITY

GAY/LESBIAN
BISEXUAL
PAN-SEXUAL
HETEROSEXUAL/STRAIGHT

GENDER

TRANSGENDER
INTERSEX
MAN
WOMAN

MIGRATION STATUS

IMMIGRANT
U.S. - BORN

OTHER STUFF

INCARCERATED/RECENTLY RELEASED
NEVER LOCKED UP

Facilitator Questions:

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