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UNDERSTANDING PREJUDICE

Length: 28 minutes

DVD SUPPORT NOTES

Prepared by Video Education Australasia, 2008

UNDERSTANDING PREJUDICE

FOR TEACHERS

Introduction

This programme explores the issues associated with prejudice and the reasons why prejudice is perpetuated in society. The individual's role in dealing with prejudice is investigated and the programme looks at ways to promote a more tolerant society where diversity is encouraged and respected.

The reasons why society chooses to either accept or reject people are examined; those who are 'different' physically, mentally, academically, socially, culturally or religiously are generally the victims who suffer from prejudicial behaviour. A brief historical look at why people have been excluded or rejected by society and why and how these views differ today is also given.

The programme also includes information about the experiences of those who have suffered prejudice because of their difference: the physically disabled, the mentally ill and those who are socially disadvantaged because of poverty, race or religion. Andrew Fuller, a well-respected clinical psychologist, provides thought-provoking and stimulating ideas for class discussions on the impact of prejudice on the individual in our society.

Outline of Programme Content

The programme deals with:

- ? What is prejudice? – **definition:** taking one aspect of a person and using it to define his/her whole being; prejudice arises out of **ignorance**; prejudice is **less overt today but still exists**.
- ? Why? – people may dislike the idea of prejudice but still perpetuate it; prejudice often acquired when young and can be formed through **stereotypes** and **examples** set by **family, friends** and the **media**.
- ? What it means to be different – **difference from the norm** is the basis of most prejudice, but **what is normal?** people who are different must choose to **conform** or to **stand up for their difference**.
- ? The impact of prejudice – inflicts **loneliness** and **alienation** on victims; broader social impacts include **bullying, discrimination**, perpetuation of **ignorance, oppression** and **civil conflict**.
- ? What can we do about prejudice – suggested strategies for tackling and reducing prejudice.

Programme Timeline

00:00:00	Introduction
00:01:01	What's in and what isn't
00:05:44	Ask the question: why?
00:12:27	What it means to be different
00:16:53	The impact of prejudice
00:22:08	What we can do about prejudice
00:27:07	Conclusion
00:27:45	Credit

Website References

www.understandingprejudice.org/

www.earlychildhoodaustralia.org.au/learning_andteaching/diversity_and_inclusion/racism_and_prejudice.html;

www.racismnoway.com.au/library/cultural/

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STUDENT WORKSHEET

Before Viewing the Programme

1. In small groups briefly research one of the following topics

- ? South African apartheid
- ? Australia's stolen generation
- ? Jewish Holocaust
- ? American black slavery
- ? Rwandan massacres
- ? Iraq / Iran civil conflict

Present your information to the class making sure you include:

- ? What happened and why did it happen?
- ? Who was/were affected, and how?
- ? What role did prejudice play in this?
- ? What has society learned from this today?

2. Play a class game called 'Exclusion'.

As students enter the room, the teacher will ask different students to sit in different places in the classroom. The students will be grouped according to any of the following categories: eye/hair/skin colour, ethnicity, body shape, favourite colour, zodiac sign or any other random group decided by the teacher. Some groups will be: spoken to sternly, excluded from fun activities, ignored when they make a request for assistance or ask questions and generally treated in a negative manner. The students in these groups may not necessarily understand why they are being excluded or who else is being excluded.

After the session the students who were excluded can share with the class:

- ? How it felt to be excluded from the class?
- ? How significant was the reason for which they were excluded?
- ? How did this micro-experience of prejudice compare to the experiences you have researched of others?

Conduct a class discussion on the feelings of unfairness and shame those who suffer prejudice experience.

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3. Make a list of the things that you may have a strong view or belief about; i.e. body piercing, sexual preference, sexual promiscuity, risk-taking behaviour such as drug use, vandalism etc. Beside each of your views or beliefs:

Tick those you believe you have formed yourself.

- ? **Circle** those you may have 'inherited' or been told by your family.
- ? **Put an asterisk** next to those that you believe have been influenced by friends and peers.
- ? **Underline** those you believe that have been influenced by the media (what you have read or seen on television).
- ? **Highlight** any that you are unsure how you may have come to have this opinion.

Collate the class data ensuring that peoples' privacy is respected.

From the class data, do you believe that prejudices are mainly learned?

- ? Which source(s) are the most influential?
- ? How valid are the sources of information?

Reflecting on some of your own beliefs about issues, do you believe that you may have formed opinions or prejudice about others who do not have the same view as you?

Explain your answer.

Were there any beliefs that you were unable to identify where they came from and why you have them?

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While Viewing the Programme

1. What are some of the everyday decisions we make that are governed by unconscious prejudices?

2. What do we consciously know that it is 'not cool' to have a prejudice about?

3. Look at the images on the screen and make some notes about the people you see presented before you. Do you believe they would fit in with mainstream society? What generalisations have you made about them based on their appearances?

4. What exactly does 'prejudice' mean?

5. What does Andrew Fuller mean when he states that prejudice is both an action and an attitude?

6. What is the link between prejudice and discrimination?

7. What does being in the 'in' group and the 'outer' group mean?

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8. Where does prejudice start?

9. What is the relationship between prejudice and power?

10. What is meant by the comment "Prejudices are formed by fear"?

11. Why are some differences deemed more acceptable than others?

12. What two choices does someone who is 'different' have?

13. What are some of the repercussions of prejudicial behaviour?

14. What can individuals do about becoming more aware and preventing prejudice?

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After Viewing the Programme

1. Write an argumentative essay or conduct a class debate on one of the following topics:
 - ? “Prejudice builds a small mind”
 - ? “Education is the key to preventing prejudice”
 - ? “It’s human nature to be scared or suspicious of things that are different”
 - ? “Prejudice arises largely out of ignorance”
 - ? “Society continues to place people in boxes of acceptable and different”

2. How can we educate and be role models for tolerance and diversity as opposed to prejudice?
In groups brainstorm and share some ideas for:
 - ? The use of language
 - ? The role of families,
 - ? Peers and the media
 - ? Child’s play and games
 - ? School and other socialising agencies

What do you believe would be the biggest barriers to educating role modelling tolerance and diversity of this?

3. Conduct a class, school or community campaign aimed at the awareness and promotion of tolerance and diversity. There are many external agencies that exist to assist in this promotion, including local government offices. Contact these agencies and ask guest speakers to attend school assemblies or to provide posters for around the school. Choose a different ability/disability or difference and highlight the issues they face each week in the school newsletter.

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Suggested Student Responses

1. Some of the everyday decisions we make that are governed by unconscious prejudices include:
 - ? Making choices about clothes and fashion
 - ? Who we choose to associate and socialise with i.e. culture and religion
 - ? Who we smile at, feel attracted to? i.e. heterosexual, same sex attracted, cultural mix etc

2. We consciously know that it is 'not cool' to have prejudices about:
 - ? Age
 - ? Culture
 - ? Ability or disability
 - ? Clothing choices
 - ? Skin colour
 - ? Religion
 - ? Hair colour
 - ? Political beliefs

3. The images on the screen include:
 - ? Man with an eyebrow piercing and his hair in a headband.
 - ? Overweight couple pushing a child in a pram.
 - ? An old man wearing glasses and leaning to one side in a wheelchair, being pushed by another man.
 - ? Dark-skinned man wearing a cap, coat and an earring, singing or rapping with others.
 - ? A group of women, some wearing hijabs and some wearing burquas.
 - ? A homeless man sleeping outside an office building near a rubbish dumpster.

4. Prejudice means taking one aspect of a person's character or appearance and using it to represent the whole of that person, usually to their disadvantage. People who attribute a whole range of qualities to somebody on the basis of their colour, gender, appearance and culture are engaging in prejudice.

5. Psychologist Andrew Fuller states that prejudice is both an action and an attitude. Prejudice starts off as an attitude that you have formed based on a belief about a certain element of a person, i.e. race, religion or sexuality. You use this one belief to represent the whole of that person, i.e. all Muslims are terrorists. You then treat all Muslims with suspicion, hostility and disdain.

6. Prejudice leads to discrimination. People act on the basis of established prejudices to exclude people from activities, work or rights entitled to them by law.

7. Being in the 'in' group and the 'outer' group is something human societies accept as the norm. It is linked to tribal customs, however people perpetuate this concept and look for ways to reject some people while keeping others in a smaller group that are accepted. Society places people in boxes of acceptable and different.

8. Prejudice and prejudicial behaviour can occur in surprising places and circumstances. People may dislike the idea of prejudice, but still act and think in prejudiced ways. This is because many prejudicial thoughts about what it is to be part of the 'norm' or different from the 'norm' are learnt early in life. Prejudices develop in many ways, the simple stereotypes we learn as children, the behaviour and examples set by families, friends and society in general also shape many unconscious prejudices. The mainstream media of film, television, print and radio also serve to reinforce prejudices already existing in the dominant culture.

9. Prejudicial differences are okay when the differences are seen as deficits because the person is seen as less of a threat. When somebody has a strong belief system or a way of being powerful that may be seen as a threat then this makes us fearful.

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10. Andrew Fuller says that prejudice emanates out of fear because people are scared of others who appear to be different, they feel that they don't understand them and then don't want to be around them. They then generalise their fear, ignorance and misunderstanding to all people that have the same type of difference.
11. Some differences are deemed more acceptable than others. What is acceptable is anyone or anything that fits the 'norm' or the majority. Anyone who doesn't conform to the conventions and rules of the majority will often be viewed as different. Some differences are more acceptable such as using a walking stick, some physical differences and disabilities are deemed more acceptable than others, and physical disabilities are more acceptable than mental health issues.
12. A person who is different from the majority has two choices. The first is to fit in and become like the mainstream and ignore their differences. This means the person will need to deny a part of themselves, maybe their culture, their religion or their beliefs to find acceptance. The second choice they have is to be strong and stand up and say "Well, I am different, these are the ways I am different, and in fact rather than see this as a source of shame, I am actually proud of these differences".
13. Prejudicial behaviour has a damaging impact on people. Prejudicial behaviour inflicts loneliness on the victims because prejudice means being singled out and alienated from the mainstream group. Being seen as not desirable to associate with, or included, can be enormously hurtful and very difficult to cope with. It can evoke a range of emotions such as embarrassment, shame, guilt, resentment, despair, depression and anger.
 - ? In the school environment it can lead to emotional, physical and cyber-bullying.
 - ? In the wider community it can have ramifications on people's pay structures and ability to get ahead in their job, and promote discrimination.
 - ? The most damaging impact of all is persecution, oppression, civil conflict and violent deaths due to deep-seated prejudices and because one group deems itself to be more powerful and superior to another.
14. There are many ways individuals can do something to help prevent prejudice such as:
 - ? Challenge the stereotypes and the myths regarding people with differences.
 - ? Be aware of the use of prejudicial language and stereotypes around young children particularly.
 - ? Think about how we can stand up for people who are being prejudiced against and take sensible actions.
 - ? Be aware that our own unconscious prejudices don't get in the way of our good intentions.
 - ? Become more educated about the culture, sexuality or religion of someone experiencing prejudice.
 - ? Challenge others to be less ignorant, and point out that whilst we all have differences, we also have similarities