***Exploring Stereotypes***

**(45-Minute Activity Guide)**

**I. Preparation:**

* Write the definition of “stereotype” on a flip chart.

**II. Required Materials:**

* Pens, pencils, paper
* Shoebox or bag for stereotype index cards
* Index cards or slips of paper
* Flip chart

**III. Introduction: (10 minutes)**

1. Remind the group that this is a safe space and that this activity will be challenging but hopefully deeply meaningful.
2. Brainstorm with the group different “identity markers.” Be sure to focus on religious identities, particularly those representative of the communities you will be (or have been) visiting this week. Other identities include gender, sexual orientation, race/ethnicity, ability, etc.
3. Ask: “What is a stereotype?” and collect responses on poster paper.
4. Share the definition of a “stereotype” from the Merriam-Webster dictionary –

"a standardized mental picture that is held in common by members of a group and that represents an oversimplified opinion, prejudiced attitude, or uncritical judgment."

1. Ask everyone to find a partner and discuss: Are all stereotypes bad?

**IV. Large Group Activity: (25 minutes)**

1. Ask if anyone would be willing to share a personal experience in which he/she was affected by a hurtful stereotype.
2. Explain that through this activity, we will be sharing or naming stereotypes we have heard, **not** that we ourselves hold.
3. To introduce the activity:

* Hold up a shoebox/bag for each identity brainstormed in the introduction.
* Distribute several index cards or slips of paper to each person.
* Provide instructions: on each index card, participants write one stereotype they’ve heard about one of the religions and then place the index card in the appropriate bag or box.
* After everyone is done placing their index cards in the box/bags, pass around one of the box/bags and ask participants to select and read the stereotype written on the card. Do the same with the cards in each box/bag.
* Ahead of time, give everyone a pen and paper to write any thoughts that occur during this exercise in preparation to reflect or for the discussion.
* Share that this activity can produce some powerful emotions, and invite participants to reflect:
  + - * “How do you feel in this moment?”
      * “Are you reminded of something you’ve seen or experienced in your life?”
      * “What does all this “move” you to do or say?”

1. Invite participants to write a poem or draw a picture. Highlight that there is no “wrong way” to do this exercise. After participants have had a chance to write or draw (about **10 minutes**), invite people to share their poems or drawings with a partner.

**V. Debriefing: (10 minutes)**

1. Facilitate a large group discussion that can include sharing poems and drawings.
2. Points to touch on:

* Stereotypes can do damage simply by being “out there” – they can get internalized even when we don’t intend prejudice.
* Importance of forgiveness – forgiving ourselves and others
* Thank everyone for participating with an open mind.

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| **NOTE:**   * + - 1. “Reflection Through the Creation of a Zine” (a 60 minute activity), AND “Responding to Real Scenarios” (a 45 minute activity) are both great follow-up activities. |