

DEALING WITH PREJUDICE

“Some people’s minds are like concrete – all mixed up and permanently set”

What is prejudice?

- Prejudice means pre-judging (i.e. judging before you find out)
- It’s a form of lazy thinking
- So watch out for fixed views, closed minds, unwillingness to think for themselves
- Unlike institutional racism for example, it’s a personal attitude
- We all have prejudices
- They often based on stereotypes, which may have an element of truth
- Prejudices are learned
- Because they are learned, they can be unlearned

“My mind’s made up – don’t confuse me with the facts.”

Here are a few typical victims of prejudice:

Northerners asylum-seekers Gypsy-travellers gay men traffic wardens Jews white-van drivers Jehovah’s Witnesses disabled people the Irish	young people in shops people who live in Platt Bridge Muslims sex offenders politicians drug users Scousers men working with young children people with “posh” accents estate agents
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Where does prejudice come from?

- misinformation
- lack of knowledge
- lack of understanding
- fear
- lack of personal experience
- over emotive responses to incidents
- over-generalising / stereotyping
- copying from parents
- following peer culture / fitting in with a group
- the media
- religion
- own deep-seated values

What can it lead to?

1. harassment (in a pyramid up from name-calling to genocide)
2. discrimination (indirect and direct)

10 WAYS TO CHALLENGE PREJUDICE

1. “Yes I know what you mean, but I’m not sure I agree with you”
2. “Let’s just think about the message that might give”
3. “Do you know the difference between fact and belief?”
4. “Different opinions can’t all be true” e.g. football
5. Give counter examples: e.g. “Yes, but Jesus was an asylum-seeker”
6. “How do you feel about prejudice against you: e.g. as a young person, an England football supporter, a woman?”
7. Unpick stereotypes: e.g. “Not all Wiganers eat pies”
8. Ask for evidence: “Oh really? How do you know that?”
9. Explain the benefits of keeping an open mind: “You live and learn”
10. “It’s all right not to have an instant opinion on every subject”

5 KEY POINTS TO REMEMBER

1. it takes moral courage to challenge
2. spend some time learning a bank of possible short-term responses
3. tackle the belief, but still value the person
4. in a group, allow other members the space and permission to disagree with a prejudiced view themselves before leaping in
5. as well as the short-term response, a longer-term educational process is likely to be necessary