



Challenging Cultural Stereotypes through Intercultural Dialogue

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Audience

This exercise is designed for university students, young professionals, or community groups who wish to develop skills in addressing and challenging cultural stereotypes in a respectful and effective way.

Goal

The objective of this exercise is to equip participants with strategies for engaging in dialogue to challenge stereotypes. Using a detailed infographic as the instructional guide, participants will learn to initiate constructive conversations, incorporating personal storytelling, active listening, counter-stories, reflection on cultural identity, creating a safe space, and following up. This exercise empowers participants to foster inclusivity and mutual understanding.

Description

Participants will engage in structured intercultural dialogue sessions where they will reflect on their cultural identities, share personal stories, challenge cultural stereotypes, and learn to create safe spaces for meaningful conversations. The exercise will guide them to respond thoughtfully to stereotype-driven comments using empathy, active listening, and counter-stories, and it encourages follow-up actions to consolidate learning.

Structure

Part 1: Reflect on Cultural Identity and Stereotypes (15 minutes)

Step 1: Individual Reflection

Each participant reflects on their cultural identity and the stereotypes they have encountered, whether personally or within society. They write these reflections down.





Intercultural Dialogue Exercises

Step 2: Sharing in Groups

Participants pair up or form small groups to share their reflections, fostering an understanding of diverse perspectives.

Part 2: Practice Active Listening and Share Counter-Stories (20 minutes)

Step 1: Creating a Safe Space

Establish ground rules: Confidentiality, mutual respect, no interruptions, and open-mindedness.

Step 2: Guided Dialogue

One participant shares a personal experience involving a stereotype.

Other participants respond by:

- Using Active Listening: Showing empathy and understanding without interruption.
- Sharing Counter-Stories: Offering alternative narratives to challenge the stereotype.

Part 3: Reflect and Follow Up (15 minutes)

Step 1: Group Reflection

Participants engage in a group discussion to reflect on the exercise and insights gained.

Step 2: Follow-Up Actions

Each participant identifies one action to implement after the exercise, such as:

- Reflecting further on their cultural identity.
- Practicing active listening in daily interactions.
- Sharing counter-stories to challenge stereotypes.
- Creating safe spaces for dialogue in their community.

Participants share their chosen actions with the group for accountability and to encourage ongoing commitment to inclusivity.





Intercultural Dialogue Exercises

Understanding the Infographic: Key Tips and Strategies

Reflect on Cultural Identity: Reflecting on cultural identity involves exploring your heritage, experiences, and values, as well as recognizing how stereotypes may have impacted you or others. This self-awareness fosters empathy and understanding in intercultural dialogues.

Use Active Listening: Active listening involves fully focusing on the speaker, showing empathy, and refraining from interrupting. This approach creates an atmosphere of understanding and validates the speaker's experiences.

Share Counter-Stories: Counter-stories provide alternative narratives to stereotypes by offering examples or perspectives that challenge existing biases. These stories help others rethink preconceived notions and embrace broader perspectives.

Ask Open-Ended Questions: Asking open-ended questions encourages deeper discussion and mutual understanding. Questions such as "Can you share more about your experience?" or "What made you feel that way?" invite thoughtful engagement.

Use "I" Statements: Using "I" statements, such as "I felt excluded when..." or "I experienced this when...", allows you to focus on your own perspective without making generalisations or placing blame. This approach invites understanding, encourages openness, and reduces defensiveness in dialogue.

Create a Safe Space for Dialogue: A safe space ensures mutual respect, open-mindedness, and confidentiality, allowing participants to share honestly without fear of judgement. Establishing ground rules helps build trust and encourages meaningful exchanges.

Share Personal Stories: Sharing personal stories helps humanize experiences and makes conversations more relatable. By recounting personal experiences, you create an emotional connection, enabling others to see a stereotype's real-life impact and fostering empathy.

Reflect and Follow Up: Reflection and follow-up ensure that insights gained during the dialogue are internalised and acted upon. Reflecting on the experience and committing to specific actions—such as practising active listening or continuing to share counter-stories—helps reinforce the learning process.





Intercultural Dialogue Exercises

Time Required

Approximately 50-60 minutes.

Hints for Success

- **Take Your Time:** Challenging stereotypes takes time, so don't rush the process. Let the conversation unfold naturally.
- **Stay Respectful:** Maintain a respectful tone, even when discussing sensitive topics. Focus on listening as much as speaking.
- **Ask Questions:** If you disagree with someone, ask questions to understand their viewpoint and guide the conversation.

Supplies Required

A printed copy or digital access to the infographic.

Resources:

Blum, L. (2020). [Stereotyping and stereotypes](#). *International Encyclopedia of Ethics*.

Barnes, E., & Souza, T. (2019, January 30). [Intercultural dialogue partners: Creating space for difference and dialogue](#). *Faculty Focus*.

Chang, D. F., Donald, J., Whitney, J., Miao, I. Y., & Sahdra, B. (2024). Does mindfulness improve intergroup bias, internalized bias, and anti-bias outcomes? A meta-analysis of the evidence and agenda for future research. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, 50(10), 1487-1516.

Dovidio, J. F., & Gaertner, S. L. (2004). [Aversive racism](#). *Advances in Experimental Social Psychology*, 36, 4-56.

Goff, P. A., Steele, C. M., & Davies, P. G. (2008). The space between us: Stereotype threat and distance in interracial contexts. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 94(1), 91-107.





Intercultural Dialogue Exercises

Souza, T. (2018, April 30). [Responding to microaggressions in the classroom: Taking ACTION](#). *Faculty Focus*.

Steele, C. M., & Aronson, J. (1995). Stereotype threat and the intellectual test performance of African Americans. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 69(5), 797-811.

Sue, D. W. (Ed.). (2010). *Microaggressions and marginality: Manifestation, dynamics, and impact*. Hoboken, NY: John Wiley & Sons.

Suryandari, N. (2020). Role of stereotyping in intercultural communication. *Journal of Humanities and Social Science*, 25(1), 24-30.

Source

Favour Ilolo, Stellina Ogedengbe, and Ifeoma Onyebuchi, developed this exercise. Others are welcome to use and adapt it.

