

Video: Things People Say (Common Stereotypes)

Talking Points

Stereotypes are associations between traits and certain groups of people (e.g., “women are weak”). Stereotypes are often learned at an early age; most often, we cannot avoid learning the content of the major societal stereotypes, even if we come to believe that these stereotypes are inaccurate. We acquire knowledge of stereotypes through the media and things we hear people say.

Stereotypes may influence people’s thoughts, feelings and behaviors, even if people do not believe that the stereotypes are true or accurate. Indeed, stereotypes often operate implicitly, or without our conscious awareness that they have been activated in the mind, or that they are affecting our reactions to others. Because of this, the term *implicit bias* is often used nowadays to refer to the ways in which stereotypes influence people’s treatment of others (or even the self) without conscious inputs or awareness.

- Have you heard the stereotypes depicted in the video before? Have you relied on these or other cultural stereotypes in your treatment of others? Have you been the target of these types of stereotypes?
- Have you ever encountered someone who made a stereotypical assumption about you? What was it and how did it make you feel? How would it feel to be the target of these stereotypes – to have people frequently treating you in ways that are consistent with these common stereotypes?
- Stereotypes are *overgeneralizations* about groups of people. Even if they are true for some people, they do not accurately characterize an entire group of people. What are the dangers of making such overgeneralizations?
- Is there such a thing as positive stereotypes? In what ways might they be just as damaging as negative stereotypes?
- Becoming AWARE that we have certain stereotypes of groups is a first step toward helping us to learn to change those stereotypes and how they operate to affect our reactions to others. How has exposure to stereotypes influenced the associations that you have with certain groups of people? Do you hold stereotypes that you would like to work on changing?

You might be interested in visiting Project Implicit Social Attitudes at <https://implicit.harvard.edu/implicit/> to learn more about implicit associations that you may hold with various groups.