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# Stereotypes and How They Affect People

KS3 CITIZENSHIP

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## What Are Stereotypes?

A **stereotype** is a fixed idea or belief about a group of people. It's often oversimplified and usually not based on facts. Instead of seeing people as individuals, stereotypes treat everyone in a group as if they're the same.

For example, someone might stereotype all **sports fans** as loud and aggressive, or all **artists** as disorganised. These ideas stick in our minds even though they're rarely true for everyone in that group.

Think of it like putting everyone from a football team into the same box and assuming they all play the same position and have the same skills. In reality, each player is different!

## Where Do Stereotypes Come From?

Stereotypes develop over time through **media**, stories, and cultural traditions.

Sometimes they come from one person's experience that gets generalised to a whole group. Other times, they're passed down through families and communities without anyone questioning whether they're actually true.

Our brains sometimes create stereotypes as a shortcut — a way to quickly understand the world without thinking too hard. But this shortcut often leads us in the wrong direction.

## How Do Stereotypes Affect People?

**Negative stereotypes** can cause real harm. They can limit opportunities for people. For instance, if someone believes that girls are bad at maths, they might not encourage girls to pursue science careers. This prevents talented people from achieving their goals.

Stereotypes also damage **self-confidence**. When people hear the same negative beliefs about their group repeatedly, they may start to believe them. This is called the

**stereotype threat** — the worry that you might confirm a negative belief about your group.

Think of it like being told you're not a good swimmer before a big race. Hearing this so much makes you nervous and less confident, and you might perform worse — not because it's true, but because you're anxious!

## **Challenging Stereotypes**

The good news is that we can challenge stereotypes. We can do this by **getting to know people as individuals**, seeking out different perspectives, and questioning assumptions. When we meet people from different backgrounds and see their unique talents and personalities, stereotypes break down.

Being aware that stereotypes exist is the first step to avoiding them. Everyone deserves to be judged as an individual, not as a member of a group.