

Tearing Off Your Labels

6. Gender Gap

Spatial Requirements: Regular classroom setup: Little or no space required

Activity Type: Movement/group

Grades: 4-12

Group Size: 4 or more

Time: 15 minutes

Introduction: Labels can often be placed on people because of stereotyping. This activity is designed to help participants see that stereotyping, or preconceived ideas about someone simply because of gender, race, age, etc. can often lead to untrue or unfair labels. Gender bias is one of the most prevalent stereotypes in our society. This activity should help students see that they have gender bias they may not even be aware of. These biases could be leading them to unfairly label others.

Materials:

- 1 copy of the story per pair (These can be found at www.whytry.org/activities.)
- 1 pen or pencil per pair
- Whiteboard or blackboard

Activity:

Divide the class into pairs. Pass out a story to each pair. Before making copies of the stories, fill in the age of John and Jenny with the approximate age of your students. Give half of the class the story about Jenny and the other half the story about John. Instruct students to read the story as partners and then answer the questions. Have the class share the results and list their responses on the board.

Processing the Experience:

- Did you and your partner have a hard time agreeing on your answers?
- How did your answers compare with those who had the same story as you did?
- How did your answers compare with those who had a different story than you did?
- How do the answers differ for John and Jenny? Do the answers reflect the fact that John is a boy and Jenny is a girl?
- Do we make assumptions about people based on their gender? Could those assumptions lead to labels? Is that fair?
- Do we let gender stereotyping influence what we like and what we do? Do we let it determine our own labels, or let it hide the “real me”?