Unit 1 Work & Career: understanding stereotypes

Objective: to provide further practice of understanding stereotypes, this time within the area of **Work & Career**.

The three-step strategy for developing this soft skill is:

Step 1: Be aware of different kinds of stereotypes. (Ex. A, Ex. B)

Step 2: Consider the stereotypes you hold and what they are based on. (Ex. C)

Step 3: Think about the negative impact of certain stereotypes. (Ex. D)

You may decide to highlight this strategy at the beginning of the lesson, and to conduct a short discussion to check that the students understand the skill and why it is useful. However, if you prefer to teach this lesson without discussing the underlying soft skill, this is also possible. The lesson is designed to be engaging and successful either way.

For more information about teaching life skills and ideas for highlighting the soft skill, please refer to p. xi and pp. 8–9 of the Teacher's Book.

MATERIALS:

- board and markers
- 6–8 photos of people in casual (not work) clothes. Ensure a good mix of ages and genders. If possible, include the following: a male in his 40s–50s, a female in her early 20s, a middle-aged mother with her son/daughter.
- poster tack or similar (to display the photos on the wall)

Lead-in

Write the word *stereotype* on the board. Put the students in small groups and give them a few minutes to write a concise definition of the word. Elicit each group's definition and write the best one on the board, e.g. *a very firm and simple idea about what a particular type of person or thing is like*. Ask the students to recall what they did in the Student's Book lesson (they looked at different kinds of stereotypes and the reasons why we stereotype people; they discussed the negative effects of stereotyping). Elicit the four categories of people they discussed (*teenagers*, *elderly people*, *men* and *women*) and invite students to recall some of the stereotypes they discussed in relation to each category.

Explain that in this lesson, they are going to look at stereotypes in the workplace.

A

- Erase the board. Post the photos of the people on the classroom walls. Put the students in pairs and ask them to circulate to look at the photos and speculate about each person's job. Encourage them to share their opinions and to give reasons for them. You may wish to point out that there are no correct or incorrect answers.
- After the students have had time to discuss each person, ask them to sit down. Conduct a class feedback session about each person's job. Encourage the students to explain the reasons for their opinions. As they discuss their ideas, pick up on any obvious stereotypes and ask the students to explain how they arrived at their conclusion, e.g. students may decide that the older man is a manager or in a position of responsibility and the mother may be a part-time worker. They may speculate that the younger female is in an administrative or junior position.
- Write the following questions on the board:
  Did you form any stereotypes in this activity?
  What caused you to form these stereotypes?
- Ask the students to briefly discuss the answers to these questions in their pairs. Listen to some of their ideas as a class.

ALTERNATIVE

If you don't have a lot of space in your classroom, put the students into groups and give each group one photo. Ask them to discuss the person and speculate about their job. Invite a spokesperson from each group to come to the front of the class, show their photo and share their ideas with the rest of the class.

B

- Erase the board and write *work* in the centre. Refer students to the photo of the older man and ask what two things might cause them to form a stereotype about his job. Elicit *gender* and *age*, and write these on the board around the word *work*.
- As a class, discuss more things that might cause us to form stereotypes about people in the workplace and add these ideas to the diagram on the board, e.g. *position within the organisation*, *part-time/full-time*, *working parents*, *specific job*, etc.

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C

- Put the students in small groups and invite them to discuss different stereotypes that you might form about people in the workplace, using the different categories on the board. If necessary, discuss two or three examples as a class to start, e.g.:
  People might think that working mothers don't focus 100% on the job because of their children.
  People might think that firefighters are always men.
  People might think that young or single people who have a high position in the workplace are ambitious and lack emotion.
- After about 15 minutes, have a class feedback session, writing some of the students' ideas on the board. Remind the students of the phrases they learnt in the Student's Book for agreeing and disagreeing, and encourage a full discussion.
- Ask students to consider what these stereotypes are based on and elicit some ideas, e.g. *students' own experiences, friends and family, media (portrayal on TV, in films and in newspapers).*

D

- Ask students to stay in the same groups – do not erase the board. Now ask the students to consider some of the negative impacts of forming these kinds of stereotypes in the workplace. Again, elicit one or two ideas to get them started, e.g.: *Women might not try to become firefighters because of the stereotype that firefighters are usually men. Working mothers might find it difficult to get promoted at work because of the stereotype that they are not focused enough on their job.*
- Give the students about five minutes for this, and then discuss ideas as a class. Finish by inviting students to suggest ways of avoiding these kinds of stereotypes, e.g. *find out more about particular jobs and their responsibilities, talk to people, socialise with different people, be open-minded.*

Reflect

- Write the following question on the board:
  Think about a time that someone formed a stereotype about you. How did you feel?
- Give the students time to read the statement and reflect upon it individually. While they are doing this, write the following ***How to say it*** box on the board:

HOW TO SAY IT

When I was …, people always used to think …
People were always thinking / would always think …

- Put the students in small groups and give them about five minutes to take turns describing the situation to their partner and discussing how they felt. Read the phrases in the ***How to say it*** box aloud and encourage them to use these in their discussion. Finally, invite the students to share their experiences and opinions in a brief class feedback session.

EXTRA: HOMEWORK

Ask the students to make an action plan for a company to put in place to avoid stereotyping in the workplace. Ask them to bring their plan to the next class to discuss in groups.

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