

# CONNECTIONS

*Communicating in Culturally Diverse Settings*

Volume 3, Issue 3

April 2006

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## How to Reduce Stereotyping

Stereotyping has a powerful impact on our day-to-day lives. Without even realizing it, stereotypes (which are the generalizations we have about the members of a particular group) can negatively impact our interactions with others. They can also cause us to act in unintentionally biased ways. Fortunately, there are four specific steps each of us can take to reduce the extent to which we stereotype:

1. **Identify your stereotypes.** You must be honest with yourself. EVERYONE STEREOTYPES. It is a

natural outgrowth of human communication and the way we process information. One way to do this is to make a short, written list of your stereotypes. Remember, **you are more likely to stereotype a group if you have limited interaction with members of that group.** Another step you can take is to ask someone you trust for feedback. This person may have observed biased actions or statements on your part that may come as a surprise to you.

2. **Identify the cause of your stereotypes.** Try to

determine the origin of your stereotypes. Think about the specific generalizations you make about the members of a particular group. Where do these generalizations come from? Many stereotypes come from the media, family members, friends and other people who are close to us.

3. **Clarify how your stereotyping is impacting your interactions with others.** You must be clear about the actual and potential effects of your stereotypes. For example, if you are responsible for hiring within your

## How to Reduce Stereotyping (continued)

company, how do your stereotypes impact your decision-making process? If you work in customer service, how do your stereotypes affect your interactions with customers from certain groups? Once again, you must be honest with

yourself if you are going to be successful at reducing your stereotypes.

4. **Identify at least one step you will take to reduce your stereotyping.** There are at least three proactive steps you can take to reduce

the impact of stereotyping in your life. The first, and most powerful, is to increase your contact with the stereotyped group. It has been well established in the research literature that face-to-face contact between members of different groups sig-

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## How to Reduce Stereotyping (continued)

nificantly reduces prejudice. The more positive interaction you have with members of the stereotyped group, the more likely you will eliminate this stereotype. The second step is to actively engage in (or interact with people who actively engage in) *anti-biased* behavior or statements. In other words, proactively talk about why specific stereotypes are wrong or inaccurate. Of course, you don't need to tell anyone about your particular stereotypes, but the more you verbally debunk your generalizations, the quicker you will rid yourself of that stereotype. Along the same lines, actively challenging biased or stereotypical statements from others will have a positive effect on reducing your stereotypes. Finally, during communication, consciously *deategorize*, by saying to yourself, "I'm going to get to know this person on an individual basis...I'm not going to make any generalizations or assumptions". The reason this works so well is that you have recognized, in your own mind, your potential for stereotyping and have taken proactive steps to stop it. This provides you with a chance to really get to know the individual on a personal level, which will further debunk any stereotypes you may have of members of this particular group.

**HFC**

**HOLMES FITNESS COACHING**

**FACILITATING YOUR FITNESS JOURNEY**

At Holmes Fitness Coaching, my primary focus is on your health, physical fitness and quality of life. Using my 4-phase *Fitness Coaching Process*, I will help you improve your health and fitness, lose weight, reduce stress, and learn how to create a better balance between your personal and professional life. I also work with organizations that want to improve employee health and fitness in ways that positively impact job performance. I offer a variety of services designed to help you enhance overall health including **Fitness Coaching, Health & Fitness Seminars, the Fitness Corner Newsletter** and **TIPS Booklets**. Seminar topics include:

1. Health, Fitness and Job Performance.
2. How to Beat Stress and Balance Your Life.
3. How to Start a Successful Exercise Program.
4. Children and Exercise: How to Create a Lifelong Connection.
5. Lose Weight and Keep it Off...Permanently.

For more information on my health and fitness services, visit [www.holmesfitness.com](http://www.holmesfitness.com).

