

Examining Our Own Prejudices

This exercise helps students to become aware of their own prejudices. Start by distributing 3 X 5 cards to the class. Ask students to write a couple of sentences about a group that they have the most difficulty with because of their ethnic background, religious beliefs, gender, sexual orientation or political beliefs. Tell students not to put their names on the cards. Collect the cards and read them aloud anonymously.

A classroom discussion follows. Congratulate students for their honesty. Ask the students the following:

- Did some of you find the exercise difficult to do? Why?
- Did you hesitate about writing negative thoughts about any group?
- Where do these prejudices come from?
- What are the damaging effects of these prejudices?

Some students will turn in blank cards because they do not want to write down negative ideas about any group or because this exercise is too threatening for them. We all have some biases and prejudices that are learned as we are growing up. We generally learn these prejudices from our parents, friends, church, the media, etc. We all need to become aware of our biases and be careful not to generalize.