

Subtopic 2: Stereotypes and Attitudes That Get In The Way of Participating In A Desired Activity

There are a number of things that might prevent a person from being able to pursue something they are interested in learning. We call these obstacles or roadblocks. For example, think about going to Disney World. Let's brainstorm what roadblocks might get in the way of going to Disney?

Activity 1: Warm-up activity regarding stereotypes and attitudes

Sometimes, when choosing a new activity we would like to learn, we get caught up worrying about all the things that might get in the way of doing the activity.

Next ask students to fill in the following sentence on post it notes:

- I would really like to (try, do) _____ but I can't or won't because _____.
- Put post it notes on the board.

Categorized responses into "time/material" reasons (e.g., transportation, money) and "attitudinal" reasons (e.g., fear of failing or some other reason, would feel uncomfortable for gender/race/poverty etc. reasons).

Some things to consider:

- Be mindful of bias toward wealthier families/families with actively engaged parenting adult(s), especially the third bullet point.
- Be sensitive to students who have limited exposure to activities beyond TV/screens; students who have parenting adult(s) who have limited ability to be involved in parenting (multiple jobs, limited financial situation, substance abuse, mental health limitations, incarceration, shared parenting duties, etc.)
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Activity 2: Attitude and Stereotype Roadblocks

Often our own, or other peoples', attitudes or stereotype influence what we think we would like to do or that we can do.

Possible attitudes and stereotypes include:

1. lack of self-confidence
2. feeling that you have to be good at something to enjoy it
3. believing only the popular kids do/play [activity]
4. personal or societal culture, gender or racial/ethnic bias
5. too heavy a reliance on what others would think of you/peer pressure/social norms, social media.

What gets in the way of developing interests or pursuing what you would like to do?



In pairs or individual responses, identify the stereotype or attitude from each of the following 5 statements.

- I won't try out for the soccer team because I won't be very good at it. [Lack of self-confidence, you have to be good at something to enjoy it, only the popular kids play soccer.]

- Ballet sounds like a great class but people would make fun of me if I did it. [What characteristics do you think of, of someone who does ballet? Are these stereotypes? What is the attitude here? Maybe there is a gender bias, or even a culture bias.]
- I really want to try out for the school play but I don't want to go to the auditions myself. I know my friends won't go with me. [Too heavy a reliance on friends, assumption that they won't go, it's not okay to do things alone. Bring in the role of motivation and how motivation can affect one's attitude. E.g., for what others think motivation may turn into an attitude that gets in the way of doing things you might want to do.]
- I'm kind of interested in the chess club but I'm not going to join. [Are there stereotypes about the kinds of kids who join the chess club?]
- I'm going to join in the pick-up basketball games down the street, even though they are all boys and I'm a girl, I enjoy it and don't care what others will think of me. [Positive attitude about feeling free to enjoy herself even if she thinks she will be judged.]

How might you deal with these stereotypes and attitudes?

Attitudes and Stereotypes Can Get in the Way

1. I won't try out for the soccer team because I won't be very good at it.
2. Ballet sounds like a great class but people would make fun of me.
3. I really want to try out for the school play but I don't want to go to the auditions myself. I know my friends won't go with me.
4. I'm kind of interested in the chess club but I'm not going to belong.
5. I'm going to join in the pick-up basketball games down the street, even though they are all boys and I'm a girl. I enjoy it and don't care what others think of me.