

Pride Against Prejudice

Katarzyna Richter, Cross Cultural Psychologist discusses handling prejudice and fighting discrimination.



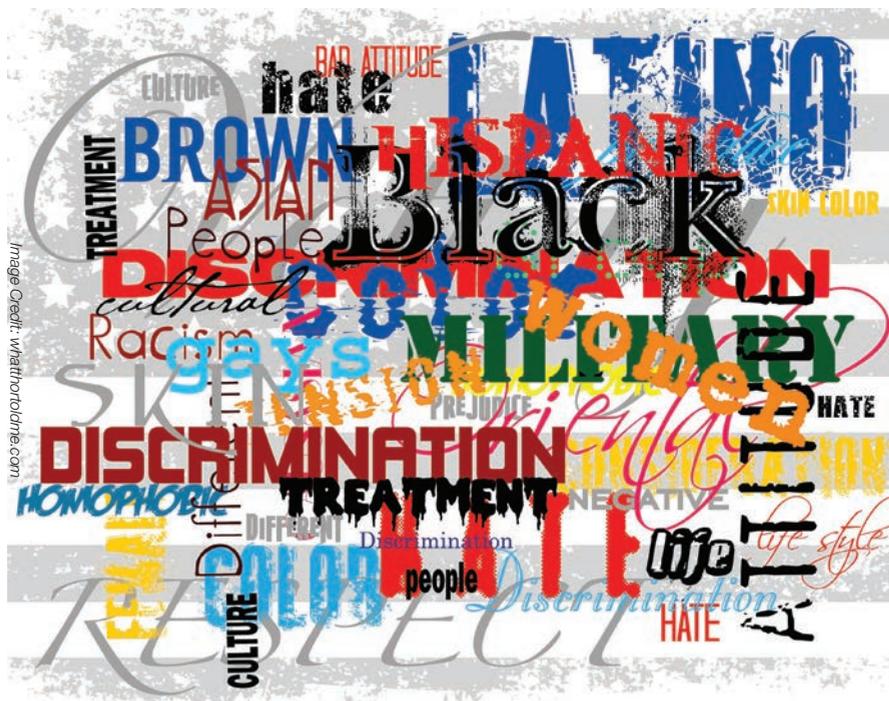
Katarzyna Richter

Being discriminated against takes away all your resources including the cognitive ones, engaging them in a fight against bullies and aggressors. Handling prejudice can be an extremely stressful and emotionally draining experience, often leading to depression or other health problems.

Have you ever thought of what makes people intolerant or even racist? It is

categorical thinking and laziness. American Psychologist, Gordon Allport once said, "The human mind must think with the aid of categories. Once formed, categories are the basis for normal prejudice. We cannot possibly avoid this process. Orderly living depends on it." Being cognitively lazy by nature, people do not take time to get to know a person they just met. Instead they

use shortcuts asking questions like "Where are you from?", "What do you do for living?", "What is your family doing?" and "Which area do you live in?". This information pigeon holes our thoughts by giving you a full description of the person based on traditional stereotypes.



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Share your feedback with Katarzyna Richter via email: katarzynarichter@hotmail.com

What is a stereotype?

Stereotypes are oversimplified ideas or images about a certain group of people, widely accepted by others. For example: "All people coming from... are..."

Prejudice has many faces. People discriminate others based on age, religion, ethnicity, appearance, physical disadvantages, race, gender and economic status. Prejudice is learned watching the behaviour of people including parents, friends and teachers. The media also plays a big role in maintaining stereotypes.

How to handle prejudice?

- Be aware of common stereotypes and try to present yourself as different from these. Master a particular skill that makes you proud; become an expert in your field of interest; make a list of your good qualities, speak them aloud and build up your confidence. You can consciously manipulate the way people perceive you. Let others see your best side.
- Be aware that using stereotypes doesn't require any effort and so people use it somewhat unconsciously. Don't react

emotionally if you're unfairly treated; remain composed and confident.

- Handling discrimination can be painful especially when you are in a foreign country, away from your family. Finding support within other groups that accept you is crucial. Make new friends who appreciate your qualities. This will not only help you get the needed support but also give your support to those who need it.
- Most importantly, keep your integrity by continually showing that you are proud of who you are and where you come from.