

PREJUDICE AND DISCRIMINATION Handout 1

What Teenagers Can Do about Prejudice and Discrimination



- 1 Work on yourself first.** You may want to deny that you have prejudices. That's a normal reaction, but the first step is to recognize that we all have been "programmed" to have prejudices and stereotypical thoughts, to one extent or another. Don't feel guilty when you find these thoughts in yourself; just work to change them. Also, look for ways you might discriminate against others without realizing it and work on changing that behavior, too.
- 2 Don't tell or laugh at jokes that stereotype or put people down.** What seems like a joke or harmless teasing to you may not be funny to someone else. If you do accidentally offend someone, don't feel badly; just apologize and refrain from making that joke again. If someone else makes an insensitive joke in your presence, tell them it's not funny. You'll be surprised what a difference it can make.
- 3 Learn about people who are different from you.** Read books and watch movies about other cultures, attend multicultural fairs, art exhibits, etc. Ask for a multicultural curriculum in your school.
- 4 Form a Multicultural Club at your school.** A Multicultural Club is an extracurricular club where people of different backgrounds get together to learn about each other. It can be a support group for students who feel frustrated with discrimination and can be an educational resource for the school. Be sure to invite *everyone* to join.
- 5 Make a special effort to expand your circle of friends to include those who are "different" or ignored.** Who do you see around you that seems lonely or excluded? Try talking to that person. If you feel awkward approaching them by yourself, ask a friend to go with you. Invite them to eat with you at lunch or join your game on the playground.