

## 1.2 Respond to differences sensitively

In the first topic of this course we identified a range of ways in which we are different from one another, and gained some insight into how we each deal with those differences as individuals. Undoubtedly we found differences in others that we are uncomfortable dealing with.

In this topic we will actually identify the differences which make us uncomfortable or to which we do react badly, and see if there is anything we can or should do about them.

### Relating to people from a range of backgrounds

#### Looking at your social world and the people with whom you feel comfortable

Even when we do not think we discriminate; even when we think we are nice to everyone we meet no matter what differences there are between us, in reality, we do still discriminate.



#### Exercise 16, differences in my social world

Make a list of your 10 best friends in the **Ten best friends** column, then make a list of an additional 10 people you would invite to a party in the **Ten party friends** column – 20 people in all.

Now fill out the remaining columns for each of those people.

What do you notice about the people you choose as friends and close friends?  
Discuss your conclusions with the group,

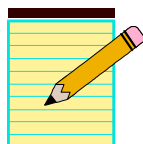
	Ten best friends	Skin colour/ race	Country of origin/ first language spoken	Religion	Education Intelligence	Physical abilities
1						
2						
3						
4						
5						
6						
7						
8						
9						
10						

	Ten party friends	Skin colour/ race	Country of origin/ first language spoken	Religion	Education Intelligence	Physical abilities
11						
12						
13						
14						
15						
16						
17						
18						
19						
20						

It does not have to be that nasty type of discrimination – just where we feel most comfortable. Whether we know it or not, most of us feel more comfortable with people from the same social, cultural and ethnic backgrounds as ourselves and with people with similar physical and mental abilities.

**Looking at your work or school world and the people you are able to deal with**

Very often, we have learnt how to deal with more diversity in the outside world than we invite into our private world. Primary school children are very open hearted and do not tend to discriminate. When you were at primary school you picked friends because you liked them, not because of the way they look, or live, or what they believe. During that time you did, in fact, learn how to relate to all kinds of differences, and those skills become apparent in school or work situations.



**Exercise 17, differences in my work or school world**

In your mind’s eye, look around your last schoolroom or workplace – NOT this current situation.

Look at who was there, and see how they were different from you or from one another.

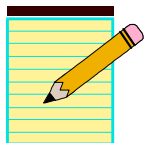
Select five people you related to successfully, who were quite different from you in some way, and complete the table below.

	Five People	How they were different	How you related to them
1			
2			
3			
4			
5			

**Looking at your world and the people you are either not willing or not able to deal with**

You've already done a lot of awareness exercises up to this point in the course. You have looked at what you are good at, or at least situations where you are not actively hurting or harming another person.

Now let's get a bit tougher on ourselves. What differences have you been unable or unwilling to deal with? What differences do you actually feel entitled to react to badly?



**Exercise 18, differences I struggle with**

In your mind’s eye, look around anywhere in your world EXCEPT this current situation.

Look at three people whose difference you were not or are not willing to accommodate. Complete the table below.

	Three people	How they were different	How you related to them
1			
2			
3			

Was it easy or difficult to identify these people? Did you surprise yourself?



**Exercise 19 – Self-Assessment, when do I discriminate?**

You can do this activity alone or as a group. You may want to keep your responses to these questions private.

- List 4 things you have learnt about yourself that you did not know before you started this course.

---



---



---



---



**Exercise 19 – Self-Assessment, when do I discriminate?**

You can do this activity alone or as a group. You may want to keep your responses to these questions private.

2. List 4 behaviours in relation to difference you are proud of.

---

---

---

---

---

3. List 4 behaviours in relation to difference you are not so proud of and think you should change.

---

---

---

---

---

4. Identify one discriminatory behaviour you do not think you are able to change.

---

---

---

5. Identify one discriminatory behaviour you do not think you are willing to change.

---

---

---

### Developing flexibility in the face of diversity

Now look at those last two, the behaviour you don't think you can change and the behaviour you don't want to change. And are you willing to look at these and see if you can change?

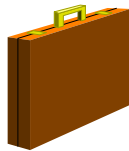
There are two parts to this:

- You can change how you feel about these people.
- You can change the way you behave towards them, even if you think you cannot change the way you feel.

So first let's look at changing how we feel.

### How you can identify fears that lead to prejudices

Many – perhaps most – prejudices are based on fear; the fears of the person who is prejudiced – that's you! Let's see how honestly you are able to identify your fears in the following case studies.



#### Exercise 20 – Case Study, feeling embarrassed

You are sitting on a bus. There is a group of students on that bus speaking in a different language. They talk for a while, then burst out laughing. At the same time one of them looks at you.

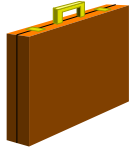
- How do you feel about them before they start laughing?
- What thoughts go through your head once the laughing starts?
- How do you feel now?

Can you complete this sentence?

I am afraid that \_\_\_\_\_

What can you do to make the situation better?

I can \_\_\_\_\_



### Exercise 21 – Case Study, feeling afraid

You are walking down the street. A group of young males of a different racial or ethnic group to yours is approaching you.

- How do you feel?
- How would you feel if there was only one of those young males and you were with a large group of people?
- What is the difference between the two situations?

As they approach closer they smile, say good morning and ask the way to their local church.

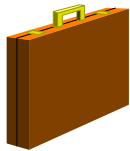
- How do you feel now?
- What is the difference?

Can you complete this sentence?

I was afraid that \_\_\_\_\_

What can you do to make the situation better?

I can \_\_\_\_\_



### Exercise 22 – Case Study, feeling concerned

You are at work. There is a new female staff member of a different ethnic group to yours. She does not speak English very well and she has a disfiguring burn on her face.

- How do you feel about her?
- How are you going to behave towards her?
- What difficulties will you have to overcome to relate to her?
- What can you do to help her fit in?
- What can your workplace do to help her fit in?

Can you complete these sentences?

I was afraid that \_\_\_\_\_.

I am able to \_\_\_\_\_.



**Exercise 23 – Group Activity, identifying my fears**

Some of the group may have found it extremely difficult to admit to fear. In many cultures it is actually socially taboo to admit to fear, particularly for males.

As a group, all those of you who feel comfortable about admitting to being afraid should share your fear statements. You may well discover, as you share your fear statements with others, that your fears are pretty common, and perhaps that some of them are not all that sensible.

**How you can change your behaviour in relation to prejudices**

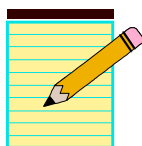
Remember we talked about two parts to dealing with prejudices. The first was identifying and dealing with fear. The second is about developing the skill to behave appropriately no matter how we feel. It's hard, but we can be nice, or friendly or helpful even when we do not feel that way.

In the workplace or working with customers, it is absolutely essential that you learn how to do this.

And surprisingly, when we change the way we behave, we often do end up changing the way we feel.

*Just do it*

One simple way to get over your prejudices is to confront them head on. The only skill this takes is willingness.



**Exercise 24, getting over my fears**

Look at the following table.

Make a second suggestion for each of the issues, then add your own two issues at the end, and two possible actions for each.

Issue	One possible action	Your suggestion
You grew up in a family that doesn't like the a particular national group.	Take a class in the language of that group.	
Your church believes that all those not of your faith are in trouble.	Take a course in comparative religions.	
You find yourself looking away when you see someone who is physically disabled.	Volunteer at the local society for the blind.	

Issue	One possible action	Your suggestion
You are male and think women should take responsibility for all home duties.	Cook a special dinner for a woman once a week.	
You are female and think men should do all the nasty stuff.	Take a course in bicycle maintenance.	
You find that all your friends are from the same national/language group.	Join a friendship association for a country or nationality that interests you.	
Someone at work is isolated because of their difference.	Ask them to suggest a movie for the work social club event.	
You don't like a woman at work because she has poor dress sense.	Talk to her and find out something else about her.	