

Deep Reflection: Understanding Ourselves and Understanding Others

The activities outlined below have all been selected to help initiate a process of self-reflection and understanding.¹ They have been placed in a suggested order, though it is down to each individual to design their journey of self-discovery.

1. Reflect on Identity and Values
2. Consider Single Stories and Stereotypes
3. Acknowledge and Challenge Assumptions

To transform our communities, we must engage with others, but first we must engage with ourselves.

Reflect on Identity and Values²

Before we enter into dialogue with others we should be asking ourselves: “Who am I? How does my identity impact my ability to communicate with and listen to others?”. The following activities will help create a foundation for such reflection.

1. On a piece of paper, note down a response to the question, *Who am I?* You might choose to list words or phrases that you, or others, might use to describe yourself.
2. Create an Identity Chart.

Draw a circle in the middle of a page and write your name in it. Then draw arrows pointing out from the circle and note down the combination of things that make you who you are (like a mindmap or a brainstorm, see an [example here](#)). Use the following list to assist you, if desired:

- a. Role in Family
- b. Profession / Skills
- c. Hobbies / Interests
- d. Personality
- e. Background / Upbringing
- f. Heritage / Nationality
- g. Colour you have been racialised as
- h. Physical Characteristics

¹ These activities have been adapted from teaching resources created by the educational charity, [Facing History and Ourselves](#).

² The activities in this section are adapted from the following Facing History and Ourselves’ resources: [Teaching Strategy: Identity Charts](#);

- i. Beliefs / Religion
 - j. Gender
3. If applicable, identify features on your identity chart that:
- a. You have felt proud of
 - b. You have felt ashamed of
 - c. Others find surprising
 - d. Are central to who you are
 - e. Are labels that others have put upon you
 - f. Have changed over time
4. Consider the following questions:
- a. Some aspects of our identities change over our lifetimes as we grow up and get new skills or new interests.
 - What does this tell us about the concept of identity?
 - Why is it important to keep this in mind when we are interacting with others?
 - b. Some aspects of our identity feel very central to who we are.
 - Why is it important to be aware of this when interacting with others?
 - What is the relationship between aspects of your identity and your values?
 - c. Some aspects of our identity are labels that others put upon us, but which we do not agree with.
 - What labels have others put on you? How have they made you feel?
 - Why do you think people put labels on others?
 - What are the consequences of such labelling?

Consider “Single Stories” and Stereotypes³

1. Watch Chimamanda Adichie’s TED Talk [The Danger of a Single Story](#)
2. Create an identity chart for Chimamanda Adichie.

³ The activities in this section are adapted from the following Facing History and Ourselves’ resource: [The Danger of a Single Story](#)

- a. Which labels on the chart represent how she sees her own identity?
 - b. Which ones represent how some others view her?
3. Consider the following questions:
- a. What does Adichie mean by a “single story”?
 - What examples does she give?
 - Why does she believe “single stories” are dangerous?
 - What does she say the relationship between “single stories” and stereotypes is?
 - b. Is there a single story that others often use to define you?
 - What is this single story?
 - What impact does it have / has it had on you?
 - c. Can you think of other examples of “single stories” that may be part of your own worldview?
 - Where do those “single stories” come from?
 - How can we find a “balance of stories”?

Acknowledge and Challenge Assumptions⁴

1. Respond to the following questions:
 - a. Based on your identity, what *assumptions* do you think people might make about you?
 - b. What *questions* could someone who holds such assumptions about you ask you to better understand your values and perspective?
 - c. If applicable, think about one assumption that someone has made about you
 - What was this assumption?
 - How did this assumption make you feel?
 - What were the consequences of this assumption being made?
 - d. If applicable, think about one assumption you have made about someone else?
 - What was this assumption?

⁴ The activities in this section are adapted from the following Facing History and Ourselves' resource: [Challenging Assumptions with Curiosity](#)

- What prompted you to make it?
 - What were the consequences of making this assumption?
2. Watch this [video](#) on how the night unfolded as the UK left the EU, which has interviews with people who hold different beliefs and opinions about Brexit. Then respond to the following questions:
- a. About which person in the video do you have the most positive assumptions?
 - What about them do you think creates these positive assumptions? (Consider race, gender, clothing, style of talking, accent, opinions, and other factors.)
 - What questions might you ask this person to better understand their values and perspective?
 - b. About which person in the video do you have the most negative assumptions?
 - What about them do you think creates these negative assumptions? (Consider race, gender, clothing, style of talking, accent, opinions, and other factors.)
 - What questions might you ask this person to better understand their values and perspective?
3. Sit in a public place for at least 30 minutes and observe the people around you. Notice the assumptions you make. Record these assumptions and what you think led you to make them. (The person's clothing? Their age? Their gender? Their body language?) Then, record questions you'd like to ask this person to better inform your perception of them.

COVID-19 adaptation: If you are in quarantine or isolation, consider the assumptions you make about people you speak to, read about or watch on TV throughout the day.