

# First Impressions

*What first meets the eye can be very misleading. First impressions are so important, it's so easy to make false assumptions about people who you don't know.*

## Issues addressed

- Personal identity
- Stereotyping
- How we make assumptions about people on the basis of very little real information.

## Aims

- To compare how people differ in their initial impressions of others
- To explore how our past experiences colour our first impressions
- To become more aware of how our impressions affect our behaviour towards others

**Time:** 30 minutes

**Group size:** 4 - 12

## Preparation

- Select pictures from magazines of people who have interesting/different/striking faces.
- Cut out the faces and stick them at the top of a piece of paper leaving plenty of space underneath. You will need to prepare one sheet per participant.
- Pencils, one per person

## Instructions

1. Ask the players sit in a circle and hand out one sheet to each person.
2. Ask them to look at the picture and write down their first impression of the person **AT THE BOTTOM OF THE PAGE**.
3. Then ask them to turn the bottom of the paper up to hide what they have written and to pass the sheet on to the next person.
4. Tell the players to look at a second picture and write down their first impression at the bottom of the page just above the turn-up, then to turn the bottom of the paper up again to hide what they have written and pass it on.
5. Repeat until the papers have been round the circle and everyone has seen every sheet.
6. Now unfold the papers and let everyone compare the different 'first impression'.

## Debriefing and evaluation

Talk about what happened and what you learnt:

- As a group?
- What surprises were there?
- What did you base your first impressions on?



- Describe and share instances when you have had a completely wrong first impression of someone.
- What happened as a result?
- What did this activity reveal about ourselves?

### Tips for the facilitator

Before you start make sure everyone understands the instructions. It will be useful to demonstrate where players should write and how to turn the bottom of the paper up.

Keep the papers moving round fairly quickly, don't let people think for too long. It's their first impressions you want.

Avoid choosing pictures of famous people or celebrities.

Try to include a wide variety of people including those of different ages, cultures, ethnic groups, ability and disability etc.

Be prepared for some fierce arguments about attitudes. Depending on the group size comments may not always be anonymous. Do not let players criticise each other for their opinions but focus the discussion on the actual comments.

### Variations

An alternative method which is good to use if you have a large group is to copy the pictures onto an overhead transparency and project them onto a screen. Ask each participant to write their first impression on a numbered slip of paper, collect the slips up after each round and then read them out at the end.

### Suggestions for follow up

Discuss introducing some new activities into your group or organisation to give you an opportunity to find out more about people who are different. E.g. invite a speaker, show foreign films or have a cultural evening including music from other countries.

If you enjoy working with images of people try 'Portraits' (page 149) and explore your ideas about your images of people who are social losers and those who are social winners. If you want to work with images that we have of people from different countries use 'Antonio and Ali' (page 63).