You and STEREOTYPES

Stereotypes are generalizations or assumptions that we form about people who are “members” of a particular group. They are another roadblock in the maze of relationships.

More long-lasting than first impressions, stereotypes become part of our thinking when we:

- suggest that all members of a group are the same, when, in fact, every person is different.
- allow stereotypes to be reinforced by images and attitudes on television or in cartoons, comic books, or other media.
- base our view on secondhand information.
- forget that stereotypes are usually inaccurate and full of negative assumptions, and often lead people to act in discriminating ways.

Prove that you can’t judge what’s inside simply by looking at the outside!

Draw a circle in the middle of a plain piece of paper, with smaller circles (as many as you want) connected to and extending out from it.

Write your name in the center circle. In each of the smaller circles, write something (a characteristic or description) that makes you the person you are, such as: female, athletic, bilingual, vegetarian, religious, only child, babysitter, or anything else you consider important to who you are. Some of these may be obvious labels you or others assign to one another.

Think of and write down a stereotype associated with any of the groups you identify with that isn’t consistent with who you are. This sentence can guide you:

I’m _______ and I’m _______.

For example, if one of your “characteristics” is “blonde,” and you thought a stereotype is that blondes aren’t smart, your sentence would be:

I’m blonde and I’m smart.

Share what you’ve written with someone you trust. Talk about a time you were especially proud to be identified with one of the characteristics you listed. Share a story about a time when you were embarrassed or afraid, or felt hurt to be identified with one of the characteristics, stereotypes, or impressions others had of you.