



AT THE CROSSROAD  
OF INEQUALITIES /  
DISCRIMINATION

PRACTICAL  
EXERCISE

# Labels

**Group size:**

any, at least five participants

**Duration:**

45–75 min (20–30 minutes for instructions and the game, 25–50 minutes for the discussion)

**Requisites for the practical exercise:**

- two self-adhesive labels for each participants
- pen

**Type of practical exercise:**

team game

**Methods used:**

role-play, group reflection

**What is the purpose of this practical exercise? What does the youth worker want to achieve? What results can they expect?**

The aim of the practical exercise *Labels* is to help participants explore the relationship between the expectations that others have of us and our own behaviour. You will encourage a discussion among the participants about the effects that stereotypes and related discrimination have on people. Participants will be able to explore intersections of different identities. They will come to understand that there is often a spill-over of one identity over others. They will come to understand that an individual who is discriminated against due to several personal characteristics/circumstances or identities at the same time cannot be treated simply as a “sum of discriminations”, but through a new reality that is established at the intersection of discriminations. At the end of the exercise, participants will be aware of the impact our behaviour has on others.



## Do you know?

Stereotypes and prejudices are key elements that contribute to intersectional discrimination, a concept that describes the intertwining of different forms of discrimination such as racism, sexism, homophobia.

These social phenomena affect intersectional discrimination in several ways:

- **Reinforcement of discriminatory behaviours:** Stereotypes (simplistic generalisations about groups of people) and prejudices (negative feelings or attitudes towards a particular group) can lead to discriminatory actions. When these negative stereotypes and prejudices are intertwined, a person belonging to several marginalised groups may experience multiple or intersectional discrimination, which is often more severe than that arising from a single source.
- **Reinforcement of structural inequalities:** Stereotypes and prejudices not only influence individual actions, but also reinforce existing structural inequalities. For example, if there is a widespread stereotype that women are less capable in STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Math) occupations, and at the same time a prejudice that darker skinned people are less intelligent, then black women in STEM fields may experience particularly intense discrimination, which comes from the intersection of race and gender.
- **Lack of recognition of intersectional identities:** Society often fails to recognise the complexity of intersectional identities, which means that policies and practices aimed at combating discrimination are often designed with monolithic categories in mind (e.g. women, black people) and do not take intersectionality into account. This can lead to a situation where policies do not address the specific needs and experiences of people who face intersectional discrimination.
- **Limited access to resources and opportunities:** Stereotypes and prejudices can limit marginalised groups' access to education, employment, healthcare and other key resources. For people who face intersectional discrimination, these obstacles are even greater, as they face multifaceted prejudices.
- **Impact on self-esteem and mental health:** Continual exposure to stereotypes and prejudices can have a negative impact on the self-image and mental health of persons experiencing intersectional discrimination. This can lead to feelings of isolation and inferiority.

Recognising and addressing stereotypes and prejudices is key to combating intersectional discrimination. This requires a comprehensive approach that includes education, awareness-raising and structural change at the societal level.



## Practical exercise plan

- Before the practical exercise, prepare the two labels for each participant. Each participant must receive their two labels.
- Depending on the number of participants, choose the most diverse combinations of roles. Some roles can also be “controversial” when identities appear to be mutually exclusive (based on stereotypes and prejudices). You can choose from the categories of personal circumstances and specific characteristics listed below.
- Some examples that you can use in any combination (examples apply to all genders):
  1. *man, woman, transgender person ...*
  2. *gay, homosexual, lesbian, bisexual ...*
  3. *refugee, migrant, foreign workers ...*
  4. *drug user, ex-addict ...*
  5. *sex worker, doctor, saleswoman, scientist, cook, educator ...*
  6. *Muslim, Catholic, Protestant, Hindu, Hare Krishna, Buddhist ...*
  7. *Slovenian, Bosnian, Indian, Asian, African, American, Palestinian, Israeli, Syrian, French, Kenyan ...*
  8. *indigenous person, Roma, black person ...*
  9. *speaks Slovenian, does not speak Slovenian, speaks English, speaks Arabic, speaks Japanese, speaks German ...*
  10. *in a wheelchair, walks with the help of a cane, diabetic, blind, deaf, deaf and mute, hard of hearing, has celiac disease, a chronic patient ...*
  11. *child, teenager, pensioner, middle-aged, over fifty ...*
  12. *poor, rich, middle class, elite, at risk of poverty ...*
  13. *completed primary school, vocational school, high school, doctor of science, master of arts or sciences, has a diploma ...*
  14. *lazy, funny, ambitious, likes to lead, shy ...*
- Also choose a joint activity that the participants will do during the role-play.
- Some suggestions of possible activities:
  1. *planning a new neighbourhood*
  2. *preparations for local elections*
  3. *parent committee meeting*
  4. *prom*
  5. *joint school trip of schoolchildren and relatives*
  6. *planning and performing a school play*
  7. *waiting room in a medical centre*
  8. *visiting a cultural event*

- Prepare the room so that participants can move around.
- Explain to the participants that you are going to play a role-playing game, in which everyone will get their role written on a label that you will place on their forehead.
- Stick the labels on the participants so that they cannot see what is written on them. Give each participant only one label (you will attach the other one later). Other participants should not reveal what is written on other participants' labels.
- Make it clear to everyone that during the task they must behave towards each other according to what it says on the label, but they must never say the word written on the label. If the label says, for example, lazy, everyone must treat this participant as if they are always lazy. If it says old, they should act like they would towards an older person. If the label says black bisexual woman, they should treat that person in a way that allows the participants to recognise their role.
- Explain to the participants that, within the framework of the activity, they must strive to treat other participants in accordance with the stereotypes, prejudices and identities written on the label.
- Then explain to the participants that they have to play their roles as part of the joint activity. Briefly present the activity you have chosen.
- The role-play can then begin. After about ten minutes, add a new label with additional information to the participants.
- After a total of twenty minutes of the label game, stop the game and invite the participants to a circle for discussion. At the end of the game, the participants can try to guess what is written on their foreheads. Although this is not the main aim of the game, ask the participants if they have guessed the identities and characteristics written on their foreheads.
- You can guide the discussion using the questions below. Make sure that all participants who want to give their opinion have the opportunity to do so.



## Questions for the discussion:

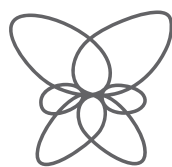
1. *How did you feel during the game?*
2. *Was it difficult to treat people according to the label?*
3. *Did you know how to behave towards each person with a specific label?*
4. *Did someone start behaving in accordance with the characteristics/ circumstances on the label? (For example, did the person with the word witty on their forehead start telling jokes and behaved more confidently? Did the person with the lazy label stop helping or cooperating at all? Did the person with the speaking Arabic label start speaking differently? Did the person with the gay label start behaving differently? How?)*
5. *What do you wish people knew about one of your identities, situations, or flaws of your role?*
6. *Did you change your behaviour towards people after they got another label? Why yes/no?*
7. *How did the new label lead to a new reality of discrimination, to the intersection of two or more discriminations? Why can't we talk about only the sum of discriminations that people experienced after getting a new label?*
8. *Which identities gave you the most trouble and why?*
9. *Did any combination of personal characteristics/circumstances on the labels surprise you? Why?*
10. *Did you have a privilege due to any of your personal characteristics/ circumstances or a combination of personal characteristics/circumstances? Were you aware of it?*
11. *What kind of labels do we give people in everyday life? How does this affect them and how does it affect our opinion and thinking about them?*
12. *In our everyday life, to whom do we apply the labels we used in the game? Are they justified?*
13. *What did you learn or realise in this practical exercise? How will you use the acquired knowledge in your everyday life?*
14. *How can this practical exercise help us better understand intersectional discrimination?*



## Advice for the youth worker

- At the end of the game, the participants can try to guess what is written on their foreheads, although this is not the main aim of the game. The central focus should be on the discussion, which should help participants understand the difference between multiple discrimination (with multiple discrimination, we are talking about the sum of personal characteristics/circumstances that lead to discrimination) and intersectional discrimination (these personal characteristics/circumstances do not add up, but intersect each other, thus creating a “new reality”). It is therefore a specific situation created by the simultaneous interaction of personal characteristics/circumstances and their associated discriminations.
- Be aware that the game can trigger very agitated emotions. Be careful that it does not escalate into verbal, psychological or physical violence. At the end of the practical exercise, explain to the participants again that they must stop role-playing.
- The practical exercise is most optimal if it is carried out in a group of up to 10 participants. This allows all participants an opportunity to express their opinions. If you have a larger group, try to split it into smaller groups and do the exercise separately for each group.
- If you cannot split into smaller groups, you can duplicate some roles (two or more participants have the same label). Duplication of roles also allows you to compare the experiences of people with the same labels and compare the attitudes of other participants towards the “same label”.
- Be careful who you give a specific label to! If there is someone in the group who is lazier, it probably won't be best for them to get the lazy label. The aim of the game is not to openly discuss the participants; this could be very unconstructive, so avoid it.
- The practical exercise is designed for one school period. If possible, we recommend that you extend the time for this exercise. Allow extra time for in-depth discussion. The larger the group, the more time you should spend on the discussion. This will allow all opinions to be heard.
- The discussion questions listed are for assistance and guidance only. We encourage you to add your own, and especially to respond to participants' comments.
- The practical exercise can be carried out indoors or outdoors. When outdoors, make sure there are as few distractions as possible (noise, weather conditions, etc.) while participants are working independently.

(The practical exercise is adapted from the Labels activity from the Education Pack “All Different – All Equal”, Second edition, Council of Europe. Ljubljana, 2004. Available at: [https://www.varuh-rs.si/fileadmin/user\\_upload/PRAVNE\\_PODLAGE/Mednarodne\\_konvencije\\_-\\_Svet\\_Evropa\\_-\\_DRUGO/ECRI/Izobrazevalni\\_prirocnik\\_-\\_Ideje-pripomocki-metode\\_za\\_medkulturno\\_izobrazevanje.pdf](https://www.varuh-rs.si/fileadmin/user_upload/PRAVNE_PODLAGE/Mednarodne_konvencije_-_Svet_Evropa_-_DRUGO/ECRI/Izobrazevalni_prirocnik_-_Ideje-pripomocki-metode_za_medkulturno_izobrazevanje.pdf))



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