

## This month's Digest

There were some good ideas for creating activities to illustrate stereotyping and prejudice on the Digest this month.

Clare Godwin, who was about to run some training on equality and diversity, asked if anyone had an activity incorporating stereotyping, prejudice and generalisations, suitable for a group of around 20 people.

Alison Ketcher replied: "A good exercise I have used in the past is to get candidates to identify 10 things about themselves, for example, working mother, divorced, Christian, or anything at all that makes them who they are.

"They then work in pairs and discuss what stereotypes they think could be attached to that label. For example, there could be a stereotype that working mothers are stressed. They rate themselves on a scale of one to ten: one being how much they are like the stereotype and ten being how much they are not.

"This shows that often we are not at all like the stereotypes that could be attached to us by others and also brings up positive stereotypes as well, which is an interesting discussion point."

Pennie Evans suggested a visual exercise in which one group is given a 'before' picture and another is given an 'after' picture of the same person from a magazine makeover article. The groups are asked to write down what they think the person's name might be, what they do for a living, how much they earn, how old they are, how they get to work, their hobbies, and so on.

The groups then present their pictures and lists to each other. Pennie said: "Without fail, the pictures trigger hugely different reactions."

# ONLINE EDITOR

**This month I began reading Jodi Picoult's new best-selling novel, *Nineteen Minutes*. It tells the fictional story of an American boy who takes a gun to school and shoots his classmates and teachers.**

Although the subject matter of the book is horrific, what Picoult does very well in it is to describe the way a 13-year-old boy, who has been bullied mercilessly by almost everyone at the school from day one, finally snaps in response to his feelings of isolation, rejection and separateness.

Of course, his is an extreme reaction, but it is an illustration of the way in which the lack of a sense of belonging to the greater community can lead to feelings of disempowerment and desperation to fight back.

When isolation and violence are put into that kind of context, it is easy to see why the government was so keen to back a new accredited community leadership programme. The programme was announced last April as part of a package of measures aimed at isolating and defeating violent extremists.

The course teaches a range of skills, from leadership and negotiation to understanding rights and responsibilities of citizenship, and working with children and young people, and aims to give leaders the tools with which to build communities.

However, I wonder if the people who have just completed the course see their communities as hot beds for fundamentalist ideals,

or even see themselves as having a role of seeking out and defeating extremists?

I shall be finding out more on behalf of *TJ* next month.

Diversity has been a bit of an ongoing thread for me this month. We all know that working with, and serving, a diverse mix of people is good for business but now that we have that, are we able to understand one another?

I was pleased to accept an invitation to a breakfast seminar on cultural intelligence presented by Steps Drama Learning Development last month.

Using actors of different nationalities, Steps played out the kinds of meetings that might occur between international colleagues. The actors all played extreme caricatures, which allowed the audience to see how a lack of cultural awareness and failure to adopt appropriate behaviour can lead to confusion, misunderstanding and conflict.

The actors frequently stopped to take advice from members of the audience, or, staying in role, answered their questions. They involved and drew out delegates' knowledge, creating a highly participative event.

This was a fun session, with lots of learning packed into a short period of time and one that I enjoyed very much, not least because of its strong business focus and the choice of scenarios that were relevant to its audience.

Next month, this page will get a much needed overhaul. As online editor, I regularly receive calls or emails from people who need help using the *TJ* Online Digest or the website. So from now on, this page will include a small selection of the most frequently asked questions and the answers to them.

The rest of the page will be devoted to the hot topics from the previous month's *TJ* Online Discussion Digest. ■

