

Managing Stereotypes

Synopsis

Stereotyping is a part of the brain possibly as a defence mechanism for the primitive man.

Are stereotypes bad? Not at all. We are able to distinguish a banana from an apple only with the built-in mechanism of stereotyping and it is unavoidable by most of us.

'Don't be judgemental' is a platitude made popular by several speakers on managing oneself, but this is almost impossible. When we see someone, we categorise the person into social labels based on their appearance instantaneously. It could be applied to diverse fields like the apparel worn, origin of nationality, religion, name of the educational institutions and many more aspects of life. Stereotypical judgements can have far-reaching implications.

Stereotyping is a part of the brain possibly as a defence mechanism for the primitive man.

Are stereotypes bad? Not at all. We are able to distinguish a banana from an apple only with the built-in mechanism of stereotyping and it is unavoidable by most of us.

Are there negatives associated with the perceptual process? Like the functioning of the mind, stereotypes also have a flip side. We are a part of the culture we live in, and it provides unconscious input to stereotypes, and the images creep into our minds without asking for permission from our logic.

At a fundamental level, a stereotype is a thought that is biased. With a stereotypical thought, the least we can do is to ensure that it does not create a negative emotion, worse, lead to any kind of discrimination. Given India's cultural and economic social diversity, our mind is likely to be a fertile playground for the generation of stereotypes.