Top 5 UDL Tips
for Reducing Stereotype Threat

How can educators create welcoming social and emotional climates that improve learning opportunities for each one of our learners? Reduce or eliminate stereotype threat to encourage everyone to participate!

Stereotype threat is the feeling that you might confirm a negative stereotype about a group to which you belong. That feeling can have a negative impact on performance. These tips are based on solid, replicated research that has shown significant promise in improving the social and emotional climate in learning environments. Use the **Ask Yourself** questions to think about these tips using the UDL framework.

1   Provide mastery-oriented feedback

Mastery-oriented feedback emphasizes effort rather than perceived innate abilities, according to Carol Dweck's research. This can reduce stereotype threat by focusing on the process all learners can take to achieve the learning goal.

Try it! Emphasize strategies and persistence rather than intelligence. For example, give feedback such as, "I see you used the strategy we talked about. Your work has paid off." Avoid praise feedback like, "you're so smart!"

Ask yourself:

- Does my feedback support growth and persistence?
- Am I sharing examples of strategies that lead to success?

2   Implement self-affirmation practices

Self-affirmation activities help learners recognize their individual strengths and interests, and have a significant impact on student achievment. Studies show that a brief self-affirmation exercise can reduce the racial achievement gap by up to 40%, and the effects can persist for months.

Try it! Start the day with an opportunity to reflect on individual values, ideas, and beliefs. This could be a writing prompt as simple as "Something I value a lot is…" or "I think a strength of mine is…" Find some great games for teaching affirmation to teens on the LiveStrong website.

Ask yourself:

- What opportunities am I creating for learners to recall feeling confident?
- How can I help learners focus on what they believe they are good at?

3 Foster emotional awareness

Encourage learners to recognize and identify their moods and understand that moods can be used productively or can be changed. This can reduce stereotype threat by helping learners see emotions as individual and related to changing contexts, rather than innate and unchangeable.

Try it! Help learners capture their changing moods by using tools such as the Yale Center on Emotional Intelligence Mood Meter.

Ask yourself:

- How might learners' moods be a barrier? How might they be an opportunity?
- What opportunities am I creating for learners to recognize, label, and identify the cause of their emotions? How can I help learners use this knowledge to make a plan to maximize learning?

4 Reframe tasks

Increase learner effort and engagement by both affirming that tasks are fairly designed and providing assurance that performance is not equivalent to intelligence or ability.

Try it! When setting a task for a class, try, "What we're doing today is challenging, but I've worked hard to make sure everyone can be successful."

Ask yourself:

- Am I assuring learners that tasks are designed in a fair and unbiased way?
- Do I regularly clarify that intelligence and performance are not the same?

5 Support positive, productive peer-to-peer interactions

Support peer interactions by building learners' skills in contributing and listening to all members of the group. This can reduce stereotype threat by helping to build a classroom community where all learners recognize individual strengths and support each other to achieve the learning goals.

Try it! When a learner has contributed a thought to the group, have that learner wait 60 seconds before contributing again. This provides others with time to share and gives active contributors the opportunity to listen and learn from others. Watch a video that has great examples of how to develop positive peer-to-peer interactions.

Ask yourself:

- How can I make sure all learners see themselves as unique individuals with important perspectives to contribute to group thinking?
- How can I empower learners to use mood reappraisal, self-affirmation, and feedback themselves in order to reduce the impact of stereotype threat and enhance learning?

Additional Resources

Read

- To learn more about stereotype threat and the research around it, visit Reducing Stereotype Threat.
- In his Edutopia blog post, "Educate to Liberate: Build an Anti-Racist Classroom," humanities teacher Joshua Block discusses five ways to build a safe, respectful environment to support and empower all learners.
- New research shows that the self-affirmation exercise described in this module has positive benefits for everyone in a class. Read more about it in "Shielding a few students from stereotypes benefits everyone's grades."
- Read about The Yale Center for Emotional Intelligence's recent research on the impact of teaching social and emotional intelligence skills in "Emotions Matter."

Watch

- In "What is Stereotype Threat?" YouTube author Conjecture provides a quick, engaging overview of stereotype threat, associated research, and examples of its impact.
- In "How Stereotype Affect Us and What We Can Do: An Introduction to Stereotype Threat," Facing History and Ourselves presents Jonathan Lykes and Researcher Claude Steele in an overview of stereotype threat.

Discover

- Take a short survey and discover your own mindset at Test Your Mindset.
- Get some strategies for how to change your, and your students', mindset at How can you change from a fixed mindset to a growth mindset?
- Check out the Social and Emotional Learning Group on Edutopia for resources and discussion on how to support students to develop skills.
- Explore how Universal Design for Learning can enhance social learning and ensure that all students can learn from one another, from UDL on Campus.