

## Activity – Writing Out Your Prejudices

This is your chance to be honest about your prejudices – are there things (other than race) that for no very good reason turn you off and possibly against other people. The challenge is to describe those prejudices and try to explain why it is you feel this way. There may be a personal reason – an event or person in your past that has altered the way (for the worst) that you think. For example, a person's name may carry all sorts of negative associations if it is the same as someone who upset or hurt you in the past. So here is a chance for you to untangle that specific person or moment from the rest of your experience.

You may have been told things about someone or a group of people which have prejudiced you. It may not be easy even spotting that an attitude you hold is prejudiced – but try to step to one side of your views for a moment in order to give them some thought.

Imagine you were confronted with a homeless person or some old chap drunk on a park bench? What would challenge any prejudiced attitudes you might have under those circumstances? In other words what do you have to forget about a person in order to feel prejudiced about them?

Note: One recent experiment in the USA used MRI scans to measure the activity in a part of brain associated with social stimuli (the medial prefrontal cortex - mPFC). Alarming, this part of the brain hardly showed any activity when people were shown images of people in 'out-groups': the homeless, drug-users. The researchers felt that this lack of response hinted at the way certain groups cease to register with the general population, almost losing their status as human beings. However, when people were shown one of these images and asked to guess at the person's favourite vegetable, then the mPFC started to show activity. It was as if, the questions had re-awakened the sense in the experiment's participants of these 'outside' people's humanity.