Changing Personal Patterns of Prejudices

Reducing prejudices needs to be more than an organizational goal; it needs to be a personal goal for each of us. The following list contains things we can do as individuals to help reduce prejudices within ourselves and in those around us.

1. Acknowledge that you have learned prejudicial information about other people. Without this acknowledge nothing can change.
2. Confront without guilt or blame the stereotypes that you have learned.
3. Enter a supportive group or a supportive relationship for making the needed changes.
4. Make a commitment to change and make a commitment to a process of change.
5. Become aware of your own “self-talk” about other groups of people.
6. Challenge the irrationality of the prejudicial thoughts or “self-talk” statements.
7. Increase your exposure to or contact with those who belong to the group(s) toward which you have learned some prejudicial stereotypes.
8. Thought-stopping is a valuable process for changing one’s “self-talk” about others.
9. Make use of Premack’s Principle*, a small rule that has power for change.
10. Learn how other groups see your own identity group.
11. Feeling good about ourselves is important in being about to accept people who are different from us.
12. Accepting indecision is an important learning style.
13. Developing empathy skills is an effective way of increasing our acceptance of others.
14. Develop listening skills so that we can really hear other people.
15. Develop an appreciation for the complexities of the universe. Knowing that one truth does not preclude another is an important concept.
16. Developing our own ability to experience caring about other people is not only important for them, but allows us to be in touch with our own connectedness and adds meaning to our lives.
17. Learning about other groups is an important way to develop understanding.
18. Valuing diversity in human appearance and in nature is important. Diversity is the reality of the nature and the strength of a species.
19. Seeking self-understanding increases the ability to accept oneself and others.
20. Responding to prejudicial jokes is critical is we are to stand for something and identity ourselves. Initially, we need to respond to prejudicial jokes in a way that clearly communicates two things:
   ▪ That we do not believe the person intended to harm others.
   ▪ That we personally find meaning in the joke that is harmful.
21. Responding to negative terms about groups of people helps us to know what we stand for and helps others to know as well.
22. Research your investments so that you are only investing in firms with strong policies of affirmative action and respect for human rights.

* More probable behaviours will reinforce less probable behaviours.

Cole, Jim. Beyond Prejudices. 1995