

Name _____

1 Read quickly and tick (✓) what the text is not about.

- a. ☐ explaining generalised ideas about groups of people
- b. ☐ explaining consequences of using stereotypes
- c. ☐ recommendations on how to behave with foreigners

Are they really like that?

A stereotype is defined as 'a fixed idea or image of a particular type of person.' They are **preconceived** ideas about groups of people and they can be positive or negative. For example, we might think that doctors are intelligent (a positive idea) or that mathematicians are boring (a negative one).

Cultural or National stereotype refers to the fixed ideas we might have about people from certain countries or regions. We might believe that British people are **polite** (a positive stereotype) or that Italian people are loud (a negative one).

In cultural training (courses that prepare people for encounters or communication with foreigners), the explanations for certain attitudes and norms are normally based on

stereotypes. In training like this we might hear that American people don't like too much **chit-chat** and prefer going straight to the point, or that they need more personal space than people in Latin America. This knowledge proves to be useful since it helps tourists, foreign students or business people **cope** with differences, as well as to behave appropriately when they meet people from other countries.

However, all of the stereotypes mentioned above are often untrue. People from different regions within a country can be very different and, in general, we are all different as human beings. This is why some people believe that stereotyping is always harmful, saying that generalising concepts about



people we don't know leads to **prejudice** and discriminatory beliefs.

What I can say to conclude is that while generalisations might help us understand others, we should always be extremely careful about stereotypes of any kind, because most of us hate being categorised in a way that does not reflect how unique each person can be.

2 Read again and number the ideas in the order they are mentioned.

1. There are positive and negative stereotypes. _____
2. People from the U.S. can be more direct than Latin Americans. _____
3. There are stereotypes about people from the same area. _____
4. There are classes that prepare you to socialise with people from different countries. _____
5. Stereotyping can be considered harmful or offensive. _____
6. A stereotype is a generalised idea about a group of people. _____
7. We should be careful about stereotypes. _____



3 Stop and Think! How would you help a foreigner understand people from your country / community?

Glossary

preconceived: predetermined, previously formed

polite: well-mannered, respectful

chit-chat: talk about trivial matters

cope: to manage, to handle

prejudice: preconception, unfair fixed idea