

Empirically Validated Strategies to Reduce Stereotype Threat

Below is a brief list of empirically validated strategies to reduce stereotype threat. *For reviews of these strategies, see:*

- Cohen, G. L., Purdie-Vaughns, V., Garcia, J. (2012). An identity threat perspective on intervention. In *Stereotype threat* (Inzlicht, Schmader, Eds.). (downloadable here: <http://ed.stanford.edu/faculty/glc>)
- Garcia, J., & Cohen, G. L. (in press). A social-psychological approach to educational intervention. In *Behavioral foundations of policy* (Shafir, Ed.) (downloadable here: <http://ed.stanford.edu/faculty/glc>)
- Steele, C. M. (2010). *Whistling Vivaldi: And other clues how stereotypes affect us*. New York: Norton & Company Inc.
- Steele, D. M. (2012). Creating identity safe classrooms. In J. A. Banks (Ed.) *Encyclopedia of Diversity in Education*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, Inc.
- Walton, G. M., Spencer, S. J., & Erman, S. (in press). Affirmative meritocracy. *Social Issues and Policy Review*. (downloadable here: <http://www.stanford.edu/~gwalton/home/Publications.html>).
- Yeager, D. S., & Walton, G. M. (2011). Social-psychological interventions in education: They're not magic. *Review of Educational Research*, 81, 267-301. (downloadable here: <http://www.stanford.edu/~gwalton/home/Publications.html>).

1. Remove Cues That Trigger Worries About Stereotypes

- Reduce prejudice (Logel et al., 2009); remove physical cues that make it seem that a school setting is defined by the majority group (Cheryan et al, 2009); don't ask people to report a negatively stereotyped group identity immediately before taking a test (Steele & Aronson, 1995; Danaher & Crandall, 2008)

2. Convey That Diversity is Valued

- For instance, communicate a multicultural ideology that explicitly values diversity (Purdie-Vaughns et al., 2008)

3. Create a Critical Mass

- Increase the visibility and representation of people from minority groups in a field (Murphy et al., 2007; Purdie-Vaughns et al., 2008), among test-takers (Inzlicht & Ben-Zeev, 2000), and in positions of authority (e.g., among teachers; Carrell et al., 2010; Dee, 2004; Massey & Fischer, 2005)

4. Create Fair Tests, Present Them as Fair and as Serving a Learning Purpose

- Use gender- and race-fair tests, communicate their fairness, convey that they are being used to facilitate learning, not to measure innate ability or reify stereotypes (Good et al., 2008; Spencer et al., 1999; Steele & Aronson, 1995)

5. Value Students' Individuality

- Remind students of aspects of their individual identity (Ambady et al., 2005; Gresky et al., 2005)

6. Improve Cross-Group Interactions

- Foster better intergroup relations (Mendoza-Denton & Page-Gould, 2008; Steele, 1997; Walton & Carr, 2012); remind students of similarities among groups (Rosenthal & Crisp, 2006); undo stereotypical associations through cognitive retraining (Forbes & Schmader, 2010); promote cooperative classrooms (Aronson & Patnoe, 1997; Cohen, 1994)

7. Present and Recruit Positive Role Models from Diverse Groups

- Expose students to successful role models from their group who refute negative stereotypes (Marx & Goff, 2005; Marx & Roman, 2002; McIntyre et al., 2003)

8. Help Students Manage Feelings of Stress and Threat

- Teach students about stereotype threat so that they attribute anxiety to stereotype threat rather than to the risk of failure (Johns et al., 2005); teach students to reappraise arousal as a potential facilitator of strong performance rather than barrier to it (Johns et al., 2008)

9. Support Students' Sense of Belonging

- Teach students that worries about belonging in school are normal, not unique to them or their group, and are transient rather than fixed (Walton & Cohen, 2007, 2011)

10. Convey High Standards and Assure Students of Their Ability to Meet These Standards

- Frame critical feedback as reflective of high standards and one's confidence in students' ability to meet those standards (Cohen & Steele, 2002; Cohen et al., 1999); more generally, teach students to view critical feedback as reflective of feedback-givers' high standards and confidence in their ability to meet the standards (Yeager et al., 2011)

11. Promote a Growth Mindset About Intelligence

- Teach students that intelligence is like a muscle—that it is not fixed, but grows with effort (Aronson et al., 2002; Blackwell et al., 2007). Promote this conception of intelligence or ability as a norm.

12. Value-Affirmations to Reduce Stress and Threat

- Have students write about, reflect on, and perhaps discuss core personal values (Cohen et al., 2006, 2009; Martens et al., 2006; Miyake et al., 2010)

Want to learn more?

On stereotype threat: ReducingStereotypeThreat.org/

Claude Steele: <http://steele.socialpsychology.org/>

Geoff Cohen: <http://ed.stanford.edu/faculty/glc>

Greg Walton: <http://www.stanford.edu/~gwalton>

Compiled by Greg Walton, Geoff Cohen, and Claude Steele (May 2012).

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