

PODCAST



PODCAST 3 - BREAKING THE BOX: CHALLENGING STEREOTYPES THROUGH ACTION

“HOW I BROKE THE STEREOTYPE”

When people first hear where I'm from, they often make assumptions. They imagine small streets-old buildings. Maybe even people who aren't very interested in technology or innovation. It used to bother me - not because I was ashamed of my hometown, but because I didn't like being placed into a box before I even had a chance to speak.

During the first weeks of my studies, I began to notice something. In group discussions about technology, some classmates would look past me. When we were assigned a digital storytelling project, roles were quickly divided. The coding part went to students from bigger cities-the ones everyone assumed were “tech-savvy.” I was politely asked to focus on visuals and text.

“You're good with words, right?” someone said, smiling.

Inside, I felt underestimated. But I didn't want to argue. I didn't want to explain myself. Instead, I decided: I would show them. I spent nights learning new tools for interactive media design. I experimented, failed, and tried again. I combined code with creative storytelling, turning ideas into something you could click, explore, and feel. It was exhausting. Sometimes frustrating. But it was also empowering - like

rewriting a story that had been written for me without my permission.

On presentation day, our group showcased one of the most original projects in the class. After the presentation, the lecturer asked a simple question: **“Who built the interactive interface?”** There was a short pause. Then my teammates pointed at me.

I'll never forget that moment - surprise on their faces. And then - genuine admiration. After class, one student approached me and said, **“I didn't know you could code like that. I guess I judged too quickly.”**

I just smiled. It wasn't about proving someone wrong. It was about being seen for who I really am.

That experience taught me something important. Stereotypes don't only exist out there.

They also live quietly inside us. I realised that I, too, carried unconscious assumptions about people from other places or backgrounds. And when you challenge a stereotype, you don't just change how others see you - you begin to unlearn parts of yourself built on fear, habit, or ignorance.

Since then, I've made a habit of questioning my first impressions. If someone seems “too confident,” I ask myself - is that really a problem, or just different from how I was raised?

If someone speaks with a strong accent, I remind myself that language is a bridge - not a border.



Breaking a stereotype is rarely loud. It doesn't happen through arguments or explanations.

It happens quietly - through consistency, action, and authenticity. By showing who you are.

And by allowing others the space to do the same.

I still think about that project, not because of the grade, but because it changed something deeper. It changed how others saw me. And even more - it changed how I saw myself. It gave me the courage to speak up and the patience to listen when others face the same invisible barriers.

Now, whenever I meet someone who feels underestimated, I tell them this:

Don't fight the label. Outgrow it.

Takeaway Message

Breaking stereotypes isn't a battle of arguments. It's a process of showing, through actions, who you truly are. Each time you act with courage and empathy, you quietly rewrite the story that others - and sometimes even you - believed about yourself.

Reflective Questions

1. Have you ever felt underestimated because of where you come from or how you were perceived?
2. What stereotypes do you notice most often - about others or about yourself?
3. How could actions, rather than words, help challenge those stereotypes?



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