Exercise
Are You Like Me?
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To see how your values affect the way you read people, record your first impressions of the next three people you meet either in person or over the phone.

1. List your impressions of the person — such as harsh, friendly, cold, rich, or smart — in one or two words or phrases. For example: Impression: Stuck-up. What's this person trying to prove?

2. Next, note as many of the person's nonverbal cues as you can, including clothing and artifacts (or accessories), facial expressions, voice, body, gestures, and so on. For example: Nonverbal Cues: Chin in the air, doesn't look at anybody, mouth tight and lips pursed, one hand on the hip and the other holding a large, expensive purse and a large Starbucks coffee.

3. Write whether, based on the above, you view the person as like you or not like you, and briefly state why. For example: Like Me or Not: Not like me. I wouldn't dress or act like that.

4. Now analyze your data by answering these questions about your past experiences:
    *   Who have you met in your life that you immediately liked? What nonverbal cues did you pick up from this person that led you to like him or her? How accurate was your first impression?
    *   Who have you met in your life that you immediately disliked or didn't trust? What nonverbal cue did you pick up from this person that led you to dislike him or her? How accurate was your first impression?

Initial encounters create an emotionally concentrated head- to-toe snapshot image that we use to assess thousands of cues in an instant. This snap is highly accurate and lasting, but assumptions based on stereotypes are not. Such assumptions group people into broad categories based on a lack of commonalities — he is not like me, which I can perceive through easily readable information like skin color or age.

Research says we typically assign more negative behaviors to people we have stereotyped, so we give them less conversation time, less eye contact, fewer smiles, and so on. This is unfortunate, as one of the few ways of changing a first impression is to see that person in other contexts.