When the word “diversity” is mentioned, several terms are likely to come to mind. Among these include race, ethnicity, gender, age, religion, physical and mental abilities, income, education, and sexual orientation. One dimension of diversity that does not always immediately come to mind is appearance. Bias based on appearance may be referred to as “lookism.” Consciously or unconsciously, we often make judgments about people based on the way they look.

**Goal**
To help participants think about the concept of lookism and to identify how appearance affects bias.

**Time**
Approx. 45 minutes

**Materials**
Markers and one flipchart for each group

**Procedure**
Divide the class into small groups (four learners to a group) and issue each group a flipchart and markers. Each group will make two flipcharts—one will be titled “How prejudice and bias focus on the physical characteristics of people” and the other will be titled “How prejudices and bias focus on the dress and makeup of people.” Under each title they will list how people are hindered for not meeting a group’s or organization’s standards (norms). Coach the groups as they work their way through the exercise. Some items that could be listed include:

**Physical Characteristics**
- Too short
- Overweight
- Too light or too dark
- Too young or too old
- Disfigured
- Not graced with “good looks”
- Features that are less desirable than social or cultural norms

**Dress and Makeup**
- Dresses out of fashion
- Body piercing
- Hair length
- Informal dress
- Impression of informality
- Expression of cultural, ethnic, religion, generational, or personal standards

After the small groups have worked on the activity for about 25 minutes, bring the groups together and have them present their findings.

**Discussion**
Discuss what is fair and legitimate to ask of people about physical characteristics and appearance when it comes to workplace norms.
- Ability to do the job
- Loss of customers and money due to how an organization’s employees look
- Safety requirements
- Loss of personnel because of bias about appearance

This activity is appropriate for adults and older youth. It can also be adapted so that the discussion focuses on inclusion in school, social groups, and other settings more relevant to the participant group.

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