

Unpack Your Perceptions About Diversity: Jamal	
Describe your early perceptions about diversity in terms of one of the following: (disabilities), race/ethnicity, language, or family structure.	
1. What are your earliest experiences/memories of someone with this difference?	I remember seeing a crippled man who walked in our neighborhood.
2. Were the experiences positive or negative? What were the messages given to you about someone who has this difference?	Thinking back on it, I think the message was negative.
3. Who gave you these messages and how were the messages delivered?	My mom; when I asked her about the man, she said not to point or talk about him and to stay away from him.
4. How did those messages affect your early perceptions of individuals who were different from you? How did you think, feel, and act?	I thought he was a bad person. The conversation made me afraid of him. I would cross the street if I saw him coming near me.
5. Do you still have those same ideas and feelings or engage in those same behaviors? If yes, how have your original perceptions been reinforced? If no, what happened to change them?	Yes. Over time, I saw others laugh at him and at other people with disabilities. I saw many people with disabilities begging for money in the street. I came to think of them as dirty. And most kids with disabilities were not in my classes, so we never really had contact with them. To this day, I am uncomfortable around people with disabilities, and even though I know better, my feelings of discomfort persist. I think talking about it would have helped, but that did not happen back then. I think not talking about it and keeping people separated in school reinforced my ideas, feelings, and behavior.

Figure 3.7. Jamal's early perceptions about people with disabilities.