

Gender Stereotypes and Me

(Years 3 & 4)



Classroom
activity

Summary:

This activity provides students with an opportunity to compare themselves with the characteristics and behaviours that they stereotypically associate with boys and girls, with the aim of highlighting how we use gender stereotypes to make judgements and how gender stereotypes can limit our identities.

Duration:

30-40 minutes

Age group:

Key Stage 2 - Years 3 & 4

Materials required:

- Scenarios (Appendix 1)

Learning objectives:

- Students understand what gender stereotypes are.
- Students can identify how gender stereotypes influence our thinking and the judgements that we make about others, which may be unfair or unkind.
- Students can recognise that gender stereotypes place expectations on all of us in terms of our behaviour and that they can narrow our interests, opportunities and how we express ourselves.

Instructions:

Step 1: Describing girls and boys (10 minutes)

- Ask students to draw two stick figures on a piece of paper - one girl and one boy - and draw or write words to describe the boy and the girl's physical appearance. They may find it helpful to give their stick boy and girl a name.
- Ask students for feedback - what are the typical features mentioned?
- Ask students to add what the boy and girl like to do and what they are good at.
- Ask students for feedback - what are the typical interests mentioned?

Step 2: Describing myself (10 minutes)

- Repeat the task with a new stick figure but this figure represents the students themselves.
- Ask students how they are similar or different to the boy and girl they described before in terms of appearance and interests.
- Discuss the following as a class: Do boys and girls have to look and dress a certain way? Can what we like, what we do and what we are good at be divided simply into being 'for boys' or 'for girls'? Is it acceptable, for example, for girls to like football and boys not to like football?

Step 3: Being ourselves (10 minutes)

- Share the scenarios in Appendix 1 and pose the questions for each situation.
- Ask students to reflect on what the consequences are of defining what we like and what we do based on being a boy or a girl. Explain how things like toys, clothes, hobbies, sports, favourite colours, chores at home, jobs, feelings etc. cannot be divided into 'for boys' and 'for girls' and that we limit our choices and opportunities if we think in this way. Show examples of role models, e.g. female footballer or power lifter, male dancer or nurse etc. to emphasise this point.



Appendix 1

Supporting information

Classroom
activity

Questions to facilitate the discussion

- Is it fair? Why/why not?
- How would that person feel?
- What would you say to the person in the scenario?
- How would you treat them?

Your friend, Melissa, is told by the boys in her class that she can't play football because she is a girl.

Your friend, Laura, wants to be an engineer when she grows up, but she has been told that it is not a job for girls.

Your little brother wants to play with dolls, but other people tell him he can't because they are girls' toys.

At home, your friend Tom doesn't have to help with any of the chores, such as clearing the table and helping with the dishes, but his sister does.

Your friend, Emily, wants to cut her hair short but other people have told her that short hair is for boys.