

ACTING LIKE A MAN, BEHAVING LIKE A LADY

Gender
Gender Stereotypes
Values
Gender-based violence
Gender norms
Women
Sex
Violence
Access
Homophobia
Violent

- ✓ 1. To help learners understand how gender stereotypes are used to shape our behaviours.
- ✓ 2. To demonstrate how people can be punished for not fitting into widely accepted gender roles.

🕒 45 minutes

★ Worksheet: 'Acting Like a Man, Behaving like a Lady' (provided)

PROCEDURE

- 1 Explain that this activity is designed to help learners to identify **gender stereotypes** and expectations, and to 'think outside of the box' in responding to them.
- 2 Begin by handing out the worksheet. Divide the class into groups of 5-8 learners and ask them to list ways in which society expects one to 'act like a man' or 'behave like a lady'.
- 3 Ask the class to share their answers. See the box below for guidance.

Values associated with men

Strong = Not needing anyone's help; standing by the decisions you make; confident and independent; physically strong

Tough = Able to withstand emotional and physical discomfort; not crying if you're hurt; heterosexual; not "girly"

In Control = Makes decisions for self and others, others don't make decisions for you; can do what you want to do and say what's going to happen; being responsible for the safety of others

Values associated with women

Emotional = Empathy (able to relate to others and their emotions); showing or expressing feelings, especially sadness, excitement, fear, happiness, and nervousness; talking about feelings, "talking things out"; sharing emotions with others

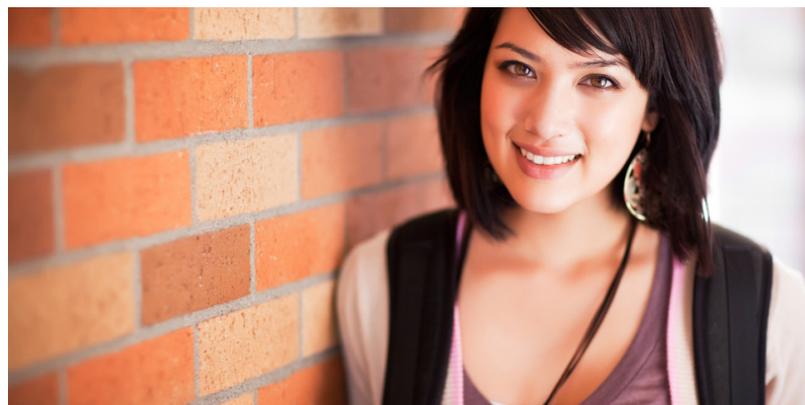
Polite = Good manners – saying please and thank you; deferring to authority; not speaking out of turn; not hurting other peoples' feelings

Taking Care of Others = Putting the needs of others first/before their own; nurturing others; noticing the needs of others & responding to those needs; doing things for others/helping others; not hurting others emotionally or physically

- 4 With the class discuss how these **gender stereotypes** shape everyday life. Questions that may stimulate discussion include:
 - a. How are 'real men' supposed to act?
 - b. How are 'good women' supposed to act?

- c. Think of your favourite movie – how does the leading man or leading lady act?
- d. Think of toys designed for girls and toys designed for boys. What messages do these toys convey about how a child should be, and what is important later in life?
- e. How do communication styles differ for 'real men' and 'good women'?
- f. What do **stereotypes** tell us about how 'real men' and 'good women' behave in relationships?
- g. How do 'real men' and 'good women' feel about **sex**?

- 5 Ask the learners to list the kinds of labels that are used to describe men and **women** who do not conform to these gender stereotypes. Encourage learners to be open and honest about the kinds of words that are used. Examples of names for men who are not 'real men' include: sissy, girly, weak, fag, ninny, poofter, gay, square, moffie. Examples of names for women who are not 'good women' include: slut, butch, ball-buster, bitch, dyke, mannish, ugly, uptight, tomboy and weird.
- 6 Emphasise to the class how these words are used to hurt individuals in attempts to fit them within accepted **gender norms** in our societies., such as the boxes of 'real men' and 'good women'. Ask learners to describe behaviours and actions that are used to keep individuals within these stereotypical roles. Examples include bullying, harassment, gossiping, spreading rumours, and using **social media**.
- 7 Wrap up the discussion by asking learners to think of ways to counteract these **stereotypes**. (This may also lead into an assessment activity – see below).



TEACHER TIPS

General

This exercise requires skill in facilitation as it raises sensitive (and likely offensive) words and labels. The teacher must be sure to explain that the classroom is a safe space within which these terms are used for educational purposes, and not as an invitation for learners to be offensive or hurtful to others.

The teacher should be sensitive to the harmful effect of using gender stereotypical and offensive words. One of the key aspects of this lesson is to highlight for learners the myriad ways in which we receive messages about appropriate gender roles. These messages may be conveyed by movies, TV shows, commercials, family, religion, school, and cultural **values**. The teacher should remind learners that **gender stereotypes** and dominant cultural values can be so common or pervasive that they can influence people without their even being aware.

In encouraging the learners to think of ways in which they can work against gender stereotypes, the exercise provides an opportunity to think of practical techniques that can challenge societal values and attitudes. It offers an opportunity for teachers to extend the discussion by explicitly linking **homophobia** to gender stereotypes.

Making the Link with Gender & Violence

The exercise seeks to provide awareness of verbal **abuse**, **sexual harassment** and name calling linked to **gender stereotypes**. Learners may understand the need to assert themselves and overcome domination and **control** in relationships.

Assessment Ideas

Learners could select a **gender stereotype** slur that is commonly used in their school or community, and design a campaign aimed at informing others about the harmful effects of using the slur, and encouraging community members to stop its use.

Learners could also write a personal reflection on how gender stereotypes (and shaming behaviours) have been used to keep them (or a person that they know) acting within the bounds of what society considers appropriate behaviour.

Learners could write a profile paper on someone in their family or community who they feel has broken out of the boundaries imposed by gender stereotypes, focusing on how the individual was able to do so.

Learners could write about a character (from a movie, book or television series) who does not follow expected gender stereotype. They could suggest how the character was able to have broken out of the gendered expectation.

Variation

Teachers could also use clips from movies, books or television series to describe characters who do not conform to gender stereotypes.



