

CHANGING ATTITUDES ON GENDER ROLES

CAN YOU SEE MY POINT OF VIEW?

- ✓ 1. To help learners understand how **gender roles** affect family relationships.
- ✓ 2. For learner to understand how families shape **values** relating to **gender**.
- ✓ 3. To help learners to respectfully negotiate relationships in which people have different gender expectations.

🕒 40-50 mins

★ **Case Studies: Can you see my point of view?** (provided)

PROCEDURE

- 1 Begin by going over the **Glossary** terms **Gender** and **Stereotypes** with the class.

GENDER: Gender is an identity that is learned, that changes over time, and that changes from one culture or society to another. In social terms it refers to the socially created roles, personality traits, attitudes, behaviours and values attributed and acceptable for men and women, as well as the relative power and influence of each. That means that gender is relational (in relation to something else) and refers not simply to **women** or men but to the relationship between them. For example a women's gender not only means that she is considered and expected to have feminine attributes like being soft spoken or gentle, but that these characteristics mean that society also expects her to be less dominant than men, and for example not become a builder, or be as good at sports as men.

In personal or individual terms gender refers to the specific roles, personality traits, attitudes, behaviours and dress that individuals use to express their personal **gender identity**, and this is influenced both by social ideas of gender, and personal feelings about oneself and how one want to be, and be seen in the world. For this reason, even though society tells us that there are only two genders, there are in fact many different ways to express ones gender that fall between or outside of man/boy and woman/girl.

STEREOTYPE: A widespread, generalised, exaggerated or oversimplified belief about an entire group of people (including ethnic, national, cultural, racial, religious, **gender minorities** or **sexual minorities**) without acknowledging individual characteristics and differences. This creates false idea that every member of a certain group will conform to certain characteristics. Stereotypes can be harmful, especially if we force them onto people, use them to label people or make people feel bad, or if we use them as standards for ourselves and others.

Explain to the class that family is one important influence in shaping gender roles, however stereotypical ideas of gender roles can negatively affect relationships. Someone's gender role may conflict with the expectations and stereotypes that their family and others have for them. This activity will explore situations where this is the case and will ask learners to think of ways to resolve the conflict or negotiate a compromise.



Chapter 3: Family Relationships / Exercise 4

- 2 Divide participants into small groups (5-8 learners). Give each small group a case study from the Case Study sheet.
- 3 Allow them 15 minutes to work on their case study and to make notes in order to present their solution and reasoning, to the class.
- 4 Once they have done this ask for a volunteer to present the case study and its solution. Then invite any challenges. Allow debate to go on for two or three minutes, but emphasise the importance of listening to each other and being non-judgmental. Then move on to the next group. Repeat the process until you have gone through all case studies.
- 5 Conclude the activity by leading a discussion using the following points:
 - a. Why is it difficult to challenge traditional gender roles? Why is this especially difficult within families?
 - b. What are some of the ways that changes in gender roles have affected relationships between men and women in a) social settings, b) families, and c) the workplace?
 - c. Can you think of any changes in gender roles that your parents may have had to negotiate in their own lives?
 - d. Which case study was the most difficult? Why?

TEACHER TIPS

General

Be careful that this exercise is not perceived as encouraging learners to rebel against their parents. Emphasise that family relationships often require compromise and that any conflicting values should be dealt with as respectfully as possible.

Making the Link with Gender & Violence

The family plays an important role in the development of the self and one's behaviour. The family will send messages about which values are most important, including values about what expectations they have about gender roles. Because the influence of the family changes as someone grows older, it is important to understand what values they learnt from their family, whether or not they agree with these, and how these values affect their attitudes towards **gender** and **gender roles**.

Ask learners how failing to meet gendered expectations might make someone vulnerable to violence. How is **violence** used to enforce gender roles?

Assessment Ideas

After the class discussion, learners can be asked to write a response about how gender roles and gendered expectations can affect relationships. Learners can include scenarios which would require negotiation of **gender roles** and expectations.



CAN YOU SEE MY POINT OF VIEW? - CASE STUDIES

Discuss these with the class:

1

Tetlanyo has never felt very 'feminine'. She is mostly interested in sport and cars, wears mainly shorts and pants, and isn't interested in traditionally 'girly' things like cooking and make-up. Her parents are embarrassed by her behaviour and really want her to look and act more 'like a lady'. What might Tetlanyo do to get her parents to understand her point of view? What resources may be helpful to her?

2

Jennifer has done well in her Matric exams and has been accepted at University to study law. She shows her parents the acceptance letter, and instead of being excited they seem disappointed. Her mother says that she understands that in today's economy many women need to work, but that Jennifer should rather look for the kind of job which would allow her to raise a family. Being a lawyer would simply require too much time at the office. How may Jennifer try and change her parents' mind? What resources may be helpful?

3

Mpho wants to tell his parents that he is gay, but he thinks they will disapprove and he is afraid that they will reject him because they think being gay is 'unmanly'. They believe that a son's role is to continue the family line by marrying a good woman and having children. What could Mpho do to get his parents to understand his point of view? What resources may be helpful in trying to do so?

4

Chris and Laura's relationship is based on equal partnership – they share responsibility for decision making and neither partner has more power in the relationship. Chris's brother criticises him for this, saying that he should 'wear the pants' in the relationship. He believes that women expect and want men to make decisions in relationships, and that Laura will lose respect for Chris if he doesn't 'act like a man' and take more of a leadership role. How can Chris help his brother understand their (Chris and Laura's) perspective on relationships? What resources may be helpful in trying to do so?

5

Fatima's family is devoutly Muslim, and all of the women in her family wear headscarves in public. Fatima is also a practicing Muslim but doesn't feel that wearing a headscarf is something that she wants to do. How can Fatima talk to her family about making this choice?

CAN YOU SEE MY POINT OF VIEW? - CASE STUDIES

6

Sajid's older brother is married. Sajid is bothered by the way his brother talks about his wife, and has serious concerns about the way he treats her. He expects her to do all the cooking and cleaning, and snaps at her when something isn't quite right. On two occasions, Sajid has witnessed his brother aggressively grabbing his wife's arm and shaking her. What should he do?

7

Vivienne and her twin brother, Dylan, are in high school. Her parents have set a weekend curfew for her at 10:30pm, but her brother is allowed to stay out until midnight. Vivienne thinks that this is unfair. How does she talk to her parents about it?

8

Jojo and Omar have been together for a few months, and things have been going very well in their relationship. Her parents like him very much, and they spend a lot of time at each other's houses. Omar has been putting pressure on Jojo to 'take the next step' in their relationship, but she does not feel ready for sex. The last time they talked about it, he said that it is 'her place as a woman' to please him. What can Jojo say to Omar to get him to understand her point of view? What resources may be helpful to her?

9

Zara asks Steve to the Matric Dance, but in their school it is usually the boys who ask the girls for a date. Even though Steve wants to go with Zara, he is afraid that his older brothers will make fun of him for being asked by a girl. What can Steve say to his brothers?