

# CULTURAL VALUES & GENDER STEREOTYPES

Gender  
Gender Stereotypes  
Values  
Gender-based violence  
Women  
Sex  
Social media  
Stereotypes  
Homophobia  
Abuse  
Sexual  
Harassment  
Control

- ✓ 1. To help learners understand how **gender stereotypes** contribute to **gender-based violence**.
- ✓ 2. To help learners understand how gender stereotypes, cultural **values** and attitudes in relationships may limit one's ability to make healthy decisions in relationships.

45 minutes - 1 hour

Scenarios Worksheet (provided)

## PROCEDURE

**1** Begin the class activity by compiling a list of cultural **values** (both positive and negative) that impact on **gender** and **gender norms**. Examples of these may include:

### Negative Values:

- Men are in control of decision-making.
- Women should look after children.
- Men's domain is the workplace, women's is the household.
- Women should never disobey their husbands.
- Femininity is a sign of weakness.
- Real men like sports.
- Real men always take the lead in relationships.
- Real men don't cry or discuss their feelings.
- Women can't be trusted.
- Girls should be seen and not heard.
- Girls shouldn't have strong opinions.
- Good girls don't need to have information about sex.
- Party girls are fun to hang out with, but you don't want to take them home to your mother.

### Positive Values:

- Men and women should be treated equally.
- Never harm other people, physically or emotionally.
- Violence is never an answer to problems.
- Everyone is entitled to their own opinion.
- We can agree to disagree.
- Everyone should be free to do what they choose as long as their choices and behaviour don't affect others.
- Respect is the cornerstone of healthy relationships and friendships.
- People should be free to express themselves as they see fit, for example, by wearing what they want to.
- We should always help those who need it.
- Honesty is always the best policy.
- We should try and understand other people's feelings and perspectives, even if we disagree with them.

**2** Discuss how cultural **values** shape our understanding of what it means to be a man or a **woman**, and how we should behave to conform to these ideals. It is important to remind the class that although cultural values are not wrong or harmful, they have important influences on various aspects of our lives including dating, **sex** and relationships. Where cultural values stop us from making healthy decisions, prevent us from **accessing** information about how to act responsibly, or entrench inequality in differential treatment of boys and girls, women and men, then these should be questioned and challenged.

**3** Hand out the worksheet provided. Ask learners to read the scenarios and answer the questions. This activity can be done individually, or in small groups as is appropriate for the class size.

**4** Once the learners have completed the assignment, ask them to share their answers with the wider group. Ask other groups whether they had similar or different answers. It is especially useful to focus on the learners' strategies for resisting or changing the cultural values portrayed, and to underline the range of alternatives that may be available to individuals in wanting to do so. This facilitates the understanding that cultural **values** are not fixed and can change, and assists them in thinking of practical ways in which they can assist the process of change.

**5** End the lesson by summarising the main concepts, including what **gender stereotypes** are, the role that cultural values have in upholding these, and how learners can use the positive aspects of cultural values to change gender stereotypes.

## TEACHER TIPS



### General

This exercise builds on the activity 'Acting like a Man, Behaving like a Lady' (Ch2, Ex 1) and could run in consecutive lessons to allow teachers to explore the role of cultural **values** in creating and maintaining **gender stereotypes**.

The teacher should remind learners that gender stereotypes and dominant cultural values can be so common or pervasive that they influence people without their even being aware of it.

In encouraging learners to think of ways to counteract gender stereotypes, the exercise provides an opportunity for the teacher to help learners think of practical ways to 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 and Violence

This exercise provides the opportunity for teachers to illuminate the harmful and **violent** practices that are perpetrated under the guise of cultural values and beliefs. It provides the learners with means of counteracting prevailing myths and stereotypes.



### Assessment Ideas

Assigning scenario activity tasks provides an opportunity to assess learners in a group or as individuals



### Variation

Scenarios can be acted out and then followed up by class discussions.

# CULTURAL VALUES AND GENDER STEREOTYPES

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**Read each of the following scenarios and answer the related questions:**

- 1. Thobeka complains to her friends when her boyfriend hurts her feelings, but she doesn't tell him how she feels.**
  - a. Why does Thobeka feel that she can't tell her boyfriend how she feels?
  - b. How could she use the same cultural value (or a different one) to help express her feelings to her boyfriend?
- 2. William joins in with his teammates when they are making fun of someone on the team, calling him 'gay'.**
  - a. Why do these boys think it is OK to behave in this way?
  - b. Which positive values could William use to convince them to act differently?
- 3. James wants to wear a pink shirt but he is afraid that his friends and family will call him a 'sissy'.**
  - a. Why does James think that others may react in this way?
  - b. How can James convince his friends and family that he is entitled to wear what he likes?
- 4. Imran has decided that, on the night of the Matric Farewell, he and his girlfriend are going to have sex. He hasn't asked her how she feels about this big decision.**
  - a. Why does Imran feel that he can make this decision for both of them?
  - b. How would you convince Imran that he should consult his girlfriend and that together they should decide whether, and when to have sex for the first time.
- 5. Ayesha makes out with her boyfriend even if she's not in the mood because she's afraid to hurt his feelings.**
  - a. Why does Ayesha feel that she can't tell her boyfriend that she's not in the mood for making out?
  - b. How can she convince her boyfriend to see her point of view?
- 6. Busi knows that she should be practising safe sex, but she doesn't insist on using condoms because her boyfriend says they don't feel good.**
  - a. Why does Busi feel that she cannot insist on using condoms, even though she knows that unprotected sex puts her health at risk?
  - b. How can she convince her boyfriend to take her wishes into account?
- 7. Siphos friends make fun of him because he apologised to his girlfriend for embarrassing her in public. They called him 'pathetic'.**
  - a. Why do Siphos friends make fun of him?
  - b. How could Siphos convince his friends that apologising to his girlfriend is the right thing to do?
- 8. Carina's brother gets rough with his girlfriend after he has been drinking at a party with his friends, and slaps her a few times. He says he's just helping her to behave right. Although Carina doesn't agree with her brother, she doesn't feel like it's her place to say anything.**
  - a. Why does Carina's brother behave in this way, and why does Carina not feel in a position to challenge his behaviour?
  - b. How could Carina convince her brother that hitting his girlfriend is not the right thing to do?