

Gender Roles

Grades 4-6, Lesson #4

Time Needed

25-45 minutes

Student Learning Objectives

To be able to...

1. Define the term "gender stereotype."
2. Describe characteristics related to gender expression and gender roles that make people different from one another.
3. Recognize that a person's beliefs about gender can influence their decisions.

Agenda

1. Define "gender stereotypes" and explain the lesson's purpose.
2. Brainstorm gender stereotypes.
3. Use case study to teach that gender stereotypes are learned and can be limiting.
4. Answer "Anonymous Question Box" questions regarding gender roles.

This lesson was most recently edited November 2021.

Elementary FLASH Grades 4-6

Materials Needed

Student Materials: (for each student)

- *Gender Stereotypes Worksheet*

FLASH Key Concepts

There are no jobs, clothes or toys that are for only one gender. People can choose the things that feel right for them.

It is important to treat everyone with caring and respect.

Activity

1. Define "gender stereotypes" and explain the lesson's purpose.

Stereotypes are beliefs that we have about whole groups of people. Sometimes we believe stereotypes and don't even know it! Stereotypes can cause us to expect people to behave in certain ways. Usually, these beliefs are hurtful or mean, but not always. An example of a stereotype about dogs is that all poodles are smart or that all Dobermans are mean. Gender stereotypes are beliefs we have about how people should act based on their gender, which means if they are a boy, a girl, both, neither, or somewhere between. Stereotypes might be true for some people, but they are never true for a whole group of people, and they can be really unfair. Today we are going to learn more about gender stereotypes and how to avoid them.

2. Brainstorm gender stereotypes.

Gender stereotypes are usually about how men or boys should act, and how women or girls should act, even though these are not the only gender identities. These stereotypes impact everyone, regardless of their gender. Let's brainstorm these common stereotypes, keeping in mind that stereotypes are never true for everyone.

Have students brainstorm stereotypes or expectations they can think of for men and women or for boys and girls. Record their answers on the board. It may help to ask what they have heard about how men and women are supposed to act, what sorts of jobs they are supposed to have, or how they are supposed to feel. Your lists may end up looking something like this:

Women and Girls

- Wear skirts
- Take care of babies
- Cry
- Are pretty
- Stay clean
- Are nice

Men and Boys

- Are strong
- Like sports
- Get dirty
- Get mad
- Make money
- Take care of girls

Once you have generated this list, lead a discussion about the way stereotypes can be unfair and limiting for everyone. Include the following points:

- *There is nothing wrong with any of the items on either list. The problem is when people are expected to act in those ways and can't show all of who they are.*
- *Sometimes people are even mean to others who don't fit the stereotypes.*
- *All people feel the pressure of gender stereotypes. Even though the stereotypes are about how men and women should act, people whose gender is non-binary feel these pressures too.*
- *There are no jobs, clothes or toys that are just for one gender, and you can't tell a person's gender by what they wear or do. People can choose the things that feel right for them, and it is important that we always treat everyone with caring and respect.*

3. Use case study to teach the concepts that (a) gender stereotypes are learned and (b) that they can be limiting.

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"Antonio is three years old. His mother is a construction worker and his father is a musician with a band. Since Dad works evenings, he takes care of Antonio during the day. Mom comes home from work, eats dinner with her son and takes care of him while his father is at work.

"Antonio's best friend, Diep, lives next door. Dad overheard a conversation between Antonio and Diep one day. Diep said, 'Let's play house.' Antonio said, 'OK, you be the mommy.' Diep told him to go to work, so she could fix lunch for the baby. Antonio got angry. He yelled, 'Mommies don't fix lunch! I'm not playing with you anymore, Diep!'"

Stop the case study long enough to ask the class why Antonio thinks that moms don't cook lunch.

"Antonio's dad said, 'You guys don't have to fight. Why not play something else?' But when Antonio suggested that Diep be a construction worker, she yelled, 'Only boys do that!'"

Ask the class:

- *Why might Diep think that only boys can work in construction? How could that stereotype limit her in life?*
- *If Antonio keeps feeling that only boys do the cooking, how could that limit him in life?*
- *If you were Antonio and Diep's babysitter, how could you help them learn that a person's gender doesn't have anything to do with what activities they do at home and what kinds of jobs they can have?*

4. Answer "Anonymous Question Box" questions about gender roles.

Related Activities for Integrated Learning

Social Studies

Identify a person who has fought against gender discrimination and write a report about them.

Homework

Students' options:

- Family homework: How has gender discrimination changed during your life?
- Individual homework: How can gender stereotypes hurt people?