

# Elementary 4: Identity, Gender Stereotypes and Roles, and Social Norms

## Lesson 1: Gender Identity and Gender Equality

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### Aim/Rationale

Students will learn about the concept of gender identity and gender equality. They will also learn to identify the signs of gender inequality and gain a better understanding of the strategies to overcome it as individuals.

### Learning Content

#### Learning Content in Sexuality Education

- 1) *Understand the norms that guide how you express yourself*
- 2) *Signs of gender inequality*
- 3) *Double standard associated with gendered attitudes*

#### Cross-Curricular Competencies

- 1) *To use information*
- 2) *To exercise critical judgements*

# Purpose

Children between 8 and 11 years old can experience an increasing awareness of their gender identity. Learning to embrace, appreciate and understand their sense of self is vital to children's development. This lesson aims to break down binary gender ideas and introduce a broader gender spectrum to students to facilitate their understanding of the diversity of gender identity. The lesson is also designed to encourage students to identify situations where gender inequality and gender stereotypes take place and empower them to challenge gender stereotypes.

Relevant to:

- Promoting egalitarian relationships
- Respecting sexual diversity

# Lesson

## Materials

1. A blackboard, whiteboard, or Smartboard
2. Green, red, and yellow cards (one set per student)

## Essential Questions

- What is gender identity?
- What is gender equality/inequality?
- What are gender stereotypes?
- What are some ways that you can combat gender stereotypes?

## Using Gender Inclusive Language

When discussing gender stereotypes, chances are that you will have to use gender labels such as *boys* and *girls* when giving examples and explanations. However, it is also possible for these terms to reinforce gender stereotypes and create a “gender binary” (i.e. the idea that there are only two distinct and opposite genders). Be cautious about using these terms and use inclusive language when appropriate. You can do this by:

- Considering gender stereotypes you could have internalized before class begins.
- Avoiding labelling students based on the gender that you perceive them to be. Only use labels that students have given themselves.
- Avoiding victimizing students of certain genders by making sweeping statements (for example, “as a girl, you must have experienced some gender stereotypes like girls should be thin and beautiful”). Instead, allow students to come up with their own ideas and responses.
- Reminding students that gender is not a binary but a spectrum. Not everyone identifies as a boy or a girl, and that's okay. They deserve to be treated equally and with respect.

## Terms

- Gender identity
- Gender equality
- Gender stereotypes

## Development [30 minutes]

1. Start the lesson by writing down the word ‘gender identity’ on the board. Discuss its definition with students. A working definition could be “your sense of your own gender”. In other words, gender identity is how you feel about who you are.
2. Tell students that gender equality is the idea that no matter what your gender identity is, everyone is able to develop to their full potential and live proudly.
  - a. Ask students to come up with some examples of equality, such as equal access to education, equal job opportunities and salaries, freedom of marrying who you want, freedom of how to dress. Write these on the board.
3. Divide students into groups of 2-3.
  - a. Have each group discuss the following questions:
    - i. Sam likes playing hockey, but her parents don’t encourage her to play. They tell her that she is a girl and hockey is not a girls’ sport. How do you think someone Sam would feel in this situation?
    - ii. Can you remember a situation where you were expected to behave in a certain way because of your gender? What did you do and how did you feel?
  - b. Encourage students to share their answers to the above questions with the class. Lead a discussion about how students feel about being treated a certain way because of your gender.
4. Define gender inequality as a situation where someone is discriminated against (treated differently) because of their gender identity. People may feel angry, wronged, and sad when facing it. Tell students it’s not right to treat people differently or discriminate against them because of their gender.
5. Compare gender identity to how one can feel about their emotions. Ask students, “right now, are you feeling happy or sad? If both you and your friends are happy, do you think you are feeling the same kind of happiness?” Conclude that people don’t always need to be either happy or sad. They can feel anywhere in between, or they can feel neither of them at all. Explain that it’s the same thing with gender identity. You can feel like a girl, a boy, or anywhere in between, or neither of them. Point out everyone is different, and everyone’s feelings about their gender are different and unique.
6. Explain that sometimes people face discrimination because they don’t feel like a boy or a girl. Ask students whether they think this is also an expression of gender inequality. Emphasize again that it’s not fair to treat people differently because of their gender.
7. Ask students: how can an individual fight against gender inequality? Use the example of Sam playing hockey again.
  - a. Divide students into groups to brainstorm strategies to help Sam.
  - b. Encourage students to share their ideas, and conclude with some suggestions:

- i. Think about a role model: encourage Sam to think about a female hockey player who she admires and use the hockey player as a role model.
- ii. Think in another way. “I play in a hockey team because I’m good at playing it”, instead of “I’m a girl and girls don’t play hockey”.
- iii. Adopt a growth mindset: it would be good for Sam to know that even if she is not as good as she expects at playing hockey, hard work and practice can always help her improve. Her gender isn’t what makes her good or bad at it.
- iv. Use self-evidence to motivate herself. Sam can encourage herself by recalling the moments that she has done well in hockey training and matches. She can use them as evidence to demonstrate that she is good at hockey and motivate herself to continue.
- v. Respond to gender inequality and point it out. Sometimes people don’t realize that they are treating people differently because of their gender until someone tells them!

### Culmination [30 minutes]

1. Draw a big cloud on the board and write “gender stereotypes” above the cloud. Tell students that gender stereotypes are generally accepted ideas about how people should look, act, or be based on their gender.
2. Ask students: what are some typical gender stereotypes for boys that you can think of? Possible answers could be short-haired, good at science and sports, strong, seldom cry, like playing video games, etc. Write them down in the cloud.
3. Ask students: if you’re a boy, do you think you have all the traits and characteristics on the board? If you’re not a boy, is there anything on the board that also describes you?
4. Give each student a piece of paper and have them draw a human figure on it. Have students fill in the figure with words and phrases that they would use to describe themselves.
5. When they have finished, ask students: which one do you think describes you better and more accurately, the word cloud on the board, or the one you just made yourself?
6. Conclude that everyone has their own gender identity, just like everyone has different personalities and characteristics. While some people fit into gender stereotypes more than others, almost everyone has parts of themselves that don’t fit into these stereotypes. Gender stereotypes can make it difficult for people to be who they are and to express themselves. We can use the strategies that we developed earlier to overcome stereotypes. We can also point out when other people are stereotyping or discriminating based on gender, and say that it’s not okay!

## Performance Objectives

By the end of this lesson, students will be able to:

- Define and explain the concept of gender identity, gender equality, and gender stereotypes
- Identify situations where gender inequality takes place
- Learn strategies to overcome gender stereotypes and gender inequality

## Assessment Ideas

1. Hand out a green card, a red card, and a yellow card to each student. Tell students you'll read out a list of statements. Ask them to raise green card if they think the statement is correct, red card if it's wrong, and yellow card if they are not sure.
2. Read each statement aloud and have students vote.
3. After each statement, lead a short discussion to debunk gender stereotypes and reinforce gender equality.

People should have the jobs they think they would be good at and are interested in.

Math is really difficult for girls.

There are some sports that girls just shouldn't play.

People should have whatever hobbies they most enjoy.

Nurse is a job which is best suited to women.

Boys shouldn't wear pink.

Everyone is equal regardless of their gender identity.



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