



2. Title: Gender Box

Short Description/Overview

Gender refers to socially constructed difference between women and men. Therefore, gender inequalities are deeply rooted in society and culture. Categories such as "man" and "woman" are products of a specific historic period and social context and as such are subjected to transformations and change. This activity is part of different educational manuals including CESI educational manual for peer educators "Relationship Abuse is of no Use".

Themes: gender stereotypes, gender roles, gender equality

Time: 30 - 40 minutes

Group size: 10 – 20 participants

Objectives

At the end of this activity, students will be able to:

- understand the concept of gender stereotypes
- realize that gender roles are not a fixed reality but are socially constructed
- initiate discussions about gender roles: how they are taught and enforced, what is the cost to boys and girls when trying to be compliant with their socially structured gender

Materials Needed:

- 2 Flipchart papers
- Scotch tape
- Markers of different colors

Step-by-step

- 1 Draw (or ask students to draw) a boy on one flip chart paper and a girl on the other flipchart paper.
- 2 Ask students to give a name to the boy and the girl: what would you like the name of this boy to be? What will be the name of this girl?
- 3 Write above the boy figure the phrase: "Act like a Real Man", and above the girl figure: "Act like a Lady".
- 4 Focus on the boy and ask students: what does the phrase "act like a real man" mean? – what behaviour do we expect from a boy when we tell him "act like a real man" – what do we tell him in order to grow up and become a "real" man – what is he supposed to do or not to do?
5. List the students' answers on the flipchart paper (either you or any of the participants). Focus on the girl and ask students: what does the phrase "act like a lady" mean? – what



behaviour do we expect from a girl when we tell her “act like a lady” – what do we tell her in order to become a “Lady” – what is she supposed to do or not to do?

7 List the students’ answers on the flipchart paper (either you or any of the participants).

8 Once the lists are complete, draw a box around each list which indicates the “gender box” or the “gender prison”.

9. Discussion

9.1 Question: What are all of the things that you said?

Answer: the different gender roles of boys and girls.

9.2 Where do we learn these gender roles? When do we begin learning them? Who teaches us these roles? Do we see these attitudes in our parents?

Answer:

- Parents, siblings, friends
- Teachers, school books
- Television shows, commercials, video games
- Music
- Magazines, books
- Sports
- Church, etc.

Can you give some specific examples from television shows, commercials, magazines, video games, etc.?

9.3 Discuss with students the differences among the attributed messages/gender roles to the boy and the girl (e.g. girls should be “passive”, “docile”, “nurturing” and “giving” while boys should be “strong”, “sexually active”, “not showing emotions”).

9.4 Are these true in real life? Namely, if a man washes the dishes or expresses his emotions, does it mean that he is not “a real man”? If not mentioned by students during the discussion explain that all of these are stereotypes, namely, the ways that the society expects a boy and a girl to behave. These stereotypes are the “prison” of our gender.

9.5 When we accept these stereotypical roles:

- What are the men’s/boy’s expectations of women/ girls?
- What are the women’s/girls’ expectations of men/boys?

9.6 What is this that keeps us inside the box/prison? Write students’ answers outside the boxes with arrows facing towards the boxes.

Possible answers:

- We learn them very early in our lives
- Fear of rejection by others and marginalization
- ...

9.7 What does it cost each individual, boy or girl, to live inside the box? E.g. can a girl become an engineer? Can a boy become a babysitter or cleaner?

9.8 Are there any costs for moving beyond the box?

9.9 What happens to individuals who do not conform to the messages inside the box?



- What happens if a boy moves beyond the “gender box” and starts behaving in a way that is not in line with his gender box? How does his family, peers and the society behave towards him?
- What happens to a girl?

9.10. Do you know a girl or a woman who behaves in a way that lies outside the gender box of women? / A girl or woman who does not conform to the messages inside the box?

Do you know a boy or a man who behaves in a way that lies outside the gender box of men? / A boy or a man who do not conform to the messages inside the box?

If yes, how were they able to move beyond these messages? What was the others reaction towards him/her?

Describe men/women that you admire: do they fit into the gender box?

How can these expectations influence our goals and our dreams for the future? What can you do in order to deal with these expectations and achieve your goals?

9.11. What do we do when we're teased or harassed for not fitting into these roles, namely, when we move beyond the box?

- Have you ever teased or harassed someone for behaving differently than what was expected?
- Have you ever been teased or harassed by someone for behaving differently than what was expected?

Debriefing and evaluation

Discuss what students can do to change their own behaviors and attitudes and become better role models for the boys and men, girls and women in their lives.

Tips for facilitators

At the beginning of this activity, it is recommended to ask students (1-2 persons) to draw the girl and the boy instead of drawing them yourself. Usually, students are more creative than facilitators, have nice ideas and they like drawing.