

Gender expectations

Curriculum links

WA Curriculum

HPE: Personal identity and change

- Factors that shape personal identities and adolescent health behaviours

International technical guidance on sexuality education

Key concept 3.1 (12-15 years):

- Gender roles and gender norms influence people's lives
- Romantic relationships can be negatively affected by gender roles and gender stereotypes

Materials

- Teaching Resource: *Gender expectations signs* [one set]

Before you get started

- Some teachers may experience difficulties dealing with the polarised attitudes of students during these activities. It is essential that teachers address inappropriate comments that may arise when discussing values or ethical issues. Successful strategies can be found in the [gender stereotyping and expectations](#) educator note.
- Ensure a [group agreement](#) is established before beginning this lesson. For classes that have already established ground rules, quickly reviewing them can promote a successful lesson.
- If possible, have students work in mixed gender groups for the group activities. This will encourage opposing views to be discussed and result in more meaningful conversations.
- Self-esteem and confidence of some students may also be an issue during this activity. Be reassuring and supportive.
- Teachers should know and understand the [protective interrupting](#) technique and what, why, when and how it is needed and used before facilitating this activity.

Learning activities

Questioning gender values

20 min

1. Prior to the commencement of the lesson, attach the gender expectations signs (Teaching Resource: *Gender expectations signs*) along a wall in the classroom to create a 'values line'.

2. Read out the following questions to the students (it is also useful to have these questions written on a PowerPoint or large pieces of paper so they can consider them silently while moving along the line). You may not use all these questions for your class.
 1. *Is it okay for guys to clean the house and take on household responsibilities?*
 2. *Is it okay for girls to take on the gardening responsibilities?*
 3. *Is it okay for guys to wear make-up?*
 4. *Is it okay for girls to play footy?*
 5. *Is it okay for guys to cry?*
 6. *Is it okay for guys to do ballet?*
 7. *Is it okay for girls to run global companies?*
 8. *Is it okay for guys to do hairdressing and fashion design?*
 9. *Is it okay for guys to stay at home and look after their children?*
 10. *Is it okay for a girl to have sex at 16?*
 11. *Is it okay for a guy to have sex at 16?*
 12. *Is it okay for guy to put pressure on other boys to have sex with girls?*
 13. *Is it okay for girls to put pressure on other girls to have sex with boys?*
 14. *Is it okay for girls to say no to sex?*
 15. *Is it okay for guys to say no to sex?*
 16. *Is it okay for guys to have sex with lots of people?*
 17. *Is it okay for girls to have sex with lots of people?*
 18. *Is it okay for guys to hug their male friends?*
 19. *Is it okay for girls to hug their female friends?*
3. Ask students to stand on the values line according to their personal views on the topic.
 1. Have groups (Yes, No, Maybe) discuss and justify their decisions, then ask a volunteer from each group to explain their own reasoning, not others. Also tell students to not respond to other student's comment when sharing to the whole classroom.
4. Highlight the definition of a stereotype (a widely held and fixed image or idea of a particular type of person or thing) and gender roles (societal expectations about the typical and appropriate behaviour of men and women). This will be explored further in the small group activity.

Ask:

1. *Where do we get our ideas about gender from?*
2. *Do society's ideas of gender roles change over time?*
3. *How do gender roles impact relationships between boys and girls?*
4. *Do you think there are double standards for sexual behaviour for boys and girls amongst your friends or in your community?*
5. *Do you think that boys are often permitted and sometimes pressured to be sexually active where girls are often discouraged from being sexually active? Is this fair?*
6. *Do you think gender equality is a matter of human rights?*
5. Use the teaching strategy **think-pair-share** to identify some things that are expected of students because of their gender and some things they expect of other people because of their gender.

Comparing gender in the media

30 min

6. Ask students to explore advertisements from the 1930s to the 1970s
7. Ask students to select one advertisement from their exploration and answer the following questions:
 1. *What is the advertisement about?*
 2. *How are men and women represented?*
Think about the setting (kitchen, laundry, workplace, etc.), the activities they are engaged in, the language that is used by, and about, men and women, etc.
 3. *Who is represented and who is omitted?*
 4. *How do you feel about the advertisement?*
 5. *What is the literal and implied message of the advertisement?*
 6. *Who is it aimed at?*
 7. *How would this advertisement be received today?*
 8. *What does this tell us about how ideas about gender change over time?*
8. Ask students to research current advertisements and identify whether it highlights stereotypical views about gender and whether it affirms diversity. Alternatively, you may want to find and print out recent advertisements for the students to discuss.
 1. *How is the advertisement achieving this? Consider the roles of the males and females; what do they say, what are they wearing, what is the product promoting?*
9. After exploring the historical and modern advertisements, discuss the following question in a small group.
 1. *To what extent has advertising about boys and girls, and men and women, changed over time?*

For additional information go to the [SeeMe: The media, my world and me](#) website. This site promotes positive body image and tackles the impact of young people's internalisation of idealised media portrayals of beauty and gender stereotypes.

3-2-1 Reflection

10. Groups share and discuss their findings using the focus questions from the previous activity with the whole class.
11. Identify similarities and differences and discuss any misconceptions they have as a result of these findings.
12. Discuss the impact the media (e.g. magazines, TV ads) has on our perceptions of gender roles and our expectations about how to behave in society (e.g. because I am female I need to wash the clothes).
13. Discuss the influence of the media and gender expectations on shaping identities. Use the focus questions and comments from the above activity to guide the discussion. Guide students to consider how the advertisements impacted on them personally. How did the advertisement encourage them to participate in something new or different?
14. Iterate with students it is important that we are allowed to express ourselves and who we are. We should not feel pressure from the media or other places to act or look a certain way because the expectations put on us. We also should not pressure others to act or look a certain way because of their gender.

External related resources

[The practical guide to love, sex and relationships](#)

A teaching resource from the Australian Research Centre in Sex, Health and Society, La Trobe University.

[Topic 3: Freedom fighters](#) (Gender)

- Social expectations and gender expectations: Is it ok for a girl to ask a boy out? Would a girl be called a slut if she had lots of boyfriends? What happens to a boy who is 'different'.