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Negative gender stereotyping affects people's human rights and freedoms. It limits people's choices and opportunities, and can manifest into discrimination, bullying and abuse. Tackling this issue is important so young people feel confident and learn that there are a number of different factors that contribute towards a person's identity.

This session looks at gender stereotypes in society and if they're fair. Students question and break down gender-related perceptions, including their own, and discuss ways to stand up for gender equality in their school and community.

This is part of our Women's Rights and Gender Equality resource materials.

Aims

- To gain an understanding of gender stereotypes and challenge these assumptions
- To learn about child rights in the UNCRC
- To discuss actions that can be taken to stand up to gender inequality

You will need

- Sticky notes
- Key terms card sort (optional)
- Handouts: Matching person to profession
- United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child – Summary

INTRODUCTION 10 minutes

Tell the class you will be talking about gender and stereotypes. Can anyone define these key terms? To help their understanding, consider doing a card sort using the resource sheet provided, or a matching activity by jumbling definitions up on the board and ask students to draw lines between them.

KEY TERMS**Gender**

Gender is a way of classifying people. Often expressed in terms of masculinity and femininity, it is largely culturally determined and is assumed from the sex assigned at birth.

Gender identity

A person's innate sense of their own gender, whether male, female or non-binary (see definition below), which may or may not correspond to the sex assigned at birth.

Non-binary

An umbrella term for people whose identity falls outside of 'male' or 'female'. Some people do not identify wholly or at all with the gender they were assigned at birth – some people have no gender at all.

Gender expression

This is how someone expresses their gender (through their actions, dress, personality). Some people still judge people on how they think their gender 'should' act.

Stereotype

A widely held but fixed and oversimplified image or idea of a particular person, group or thing.

Gender stereotype

Generally accepted ideas about how people 'should' act or be based on the gender that other people perceive them to be.

Teacher note

Some people don't fall into any of these categories, and some people have a gender identity which is different from their sex and may be transgender or non-binary. Intersex people have genital, chromosomal or hormonal characteristics that do not fit the standard anatomical definitions of 'male' and 'female' bodies. You may want to explain this.

Starter

Can the class share any examples of stereotypes they know? Explain we all make snap judgements based on how people look, or on the 'group' they fall into, but do they actually believe these judgements are true?

If they struggle to think of some stereotypes, ask if they have heard of one or two of

these examples, and what do they think of them?

Boys don't cry.

Girls don't like football

Scientists are male.

TASK 1 20 minutes

Challenging gender stereotypes

Now ask the class to think about gender stereotypes – preconceived notions about how people should act or be.

Work as a class or in groups. Write the words Girl, Non-Binary, Boy, Any Gender on the board in columns or use a venn diagram.

Ask students to write down, on post-it notes, words and phrases that they associate with different genders. It can include behaviour, qualities, toys they like, sports, jobs, hobbies. They can put the notes in the appropriate column on the board.

Teacher note There are a variety of different gender identities, including non-binary, and you may want to include other gender identities in this activity.

You might like to collect student responses to use in your future lesson planning to challenge stereotypes further. For example, if several students suggest all doctors are men, you could be particularly aware of this and of how you represent gender in future science lessons.

Discuss their responses. Is anything they have written down a stereotype? Ask why they thought that and whether it is true for every person. What descriptions fit into the Any gender section?

Picture handout

Give out the *Matching person to profession handout*. Ask pairs to match the people to the jobs.

Go through the answers with them. How many did they get right? Are they surprised by the results? Challenge their preconceptions. How did they decide? Were any of their choices based on what gender the person is, and their view of what job they 'should' be doing? Is this a good way to make choices?

The answers



Astronaut Mae Jemison

A doctor, engineer and NASA astronaut. In 1992, she became the first black woman to travel into space.



Women's rights defender Gloria Steinem

A journalist and trailblazing feminist who became a passionate leader of the women's rights movement in the late 20th and early 21st centuries.



Women's rights advocate Mohammad Naciri

UN Women regional director for Asia and the Pacific. He has worked in Kuwait, Iraq, Syria, Lebanon and Cambodia on issues including human trafficking and ethnic cleansing.



Fashion designer Henry Holland

He worked at styling and editing for fashion magazines before turning into a fashion designer. He now has his own fashion label House of Holland.



Dance choreographer Drew McOnie

One of Britain's most successful choreographers, Drew started dancing when he was six years old and took classes at his local dance school.



Architect Dame Zaha Hadid

An Iraqi-British architect, she was the first woman to receive the Pritzker Architecture Prize 2004. She received the UK's most prestigious Stirling Prize in 2010 and 2011.



Politician Mhairi Black

She is the Scottish National Party MP for Paisley and Renfrewshire South. When she was elected in 2015, she was 20 years old which made her the youngest sitting MP.

Ask: What do you want to be when you grow up?

How would you feel if you weren't allowed to do that job because of your gender?

Is that fair? Is there anything to stop people of any gender doing these jobs?

Try to encourage the class to understand that it doesn't matter what your gender is, you are free to choose any subjects and jobs you want, and it is important to look at people as individuals rather than put people into groups.

TASK 2 15 minutes

Rights every human is entitled to

Ask students what rights all children should have and list them on the board.

Hand out the *United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child – Summary*. These are the rights the UN say every child should have.

What are some of the rights that you missed, and why?

Are there any rights that you think are more important to a specific gender? Why?

Highlight Article 2, emphasising that the Convention applies to every child without discrimination, including gender. They all have equal rights and should be treated fairly.

Link to the first activity about different professions, and emphasise again that they have the right to do any job they choose and that gender stereotyping needs to end.

Discuss how they think gender stereotyping could limit girls and women as they grow up if it isn't challenged.

Optional task

Use some statements (examples below) around the issue of gender inequality and ask students to stand anywhere in the classroom along the opinion line, with strongly agree and disagree at either end. They must be prepared to justify their opinion. Why do they think that? Do they think it is fair?

Teacher note Please ensure that the discussion after each statement highlights the need for equality and challenging the gender stereotype.

Some jobs should only be done by men

Women are better at caring for children

A bad insult to a boy is to call him a 'girl'

Girls are just as competitive as boys

A doll is a good present for a little boy

Girls talk more than boys

Boys are better at maths

Everyone can do household chores

Girls and boys can't play games together



Activist Malala Yousafzai
© Amnesty International

During discussions, link back to the *Matching person to profession* activity and remind students that there were real people who challenged gender assumptions – and they should do the same. Pick one or two individuals and describe how they did not conform to gender stereotypes in more detail.

TASK 3 10 minutes

Personal experiences

Have students ever been told that they can't do something or were treated differently because of their gender?

Were they expected to behave, dress, talk or respond in a certain way because of being a particular gender? When and why?

If they can't think of any personal examples, ask them to think about examples from books or TV shows.

What happened?

How did it make them feel?

What did they do – or wish they'd done?

Did anyone speak up for them? How could others have helped?

This activity should be teacher-led but the class can write answers on sticky notes to stick on the door.

Make sure students understand they should not be forced into gender roles and it is OK for them to question them and to defend others.

Discuss the importance of accepting others who may not fit stereotypes.

Follow up questions for class discussion

- Do they think that different genders are very different?
- Is it fair to treat people differently?
- In pairs, ask how can we ensure that people are treated equally? Take feedback and list actions on the board.

Optional activity

Sometimes people's rights are ignored. How could you help to stop that happening? Here are two young people who have taken action against gender inequality.

- A seven-year-old girl in the US was sent out of a wet play area for wearing swim shorts like the boys so she wrote to the manager – and received an apology.
- Malala (pictured above) believed that all girls deserved an education. She lived in the Swat Valley, Pakistan, when the Taliban took control and stopped girls going to school. She spoke out publicly on behalf of girls and their right to learn and is now a campaigner for education and equality.

Explain to the class that they can take action like this too.

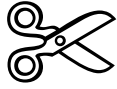
FINALLY... 5 minutes

Ask students to write down one assumption about gender that they have decided not to make anymore, and one thing they have learnt from this lesson.

EXTENSION

What small everyday actions could you and the school take to challenge gender stereotyping and ensure everyone is treated fairly?

KEY TERMS CARD SORT



Cut out and ask the students to match the key terms to the definitions

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SUMMARY UNITED NATIONS CONVENTION ON THE RIGHTS OF THE CHILD

Every child has the right to life.

Every child has the right to a name and a nationality.

Every child has the right to be with their family or with those who will care for them best. Every child has the right to enough food and clean water.

Every child has the right to an adequate standard of living.

Every child has the right to health care.

Every child with a disability has the right to special care and support.

Every child has the right to relax and play.

Every child has the right to privacy.

Every child has the right to education.

Every child has the right to be kept safe and not to be hurt or neglected.

No child should be used as cheap labour or as a soldier.

Children who break the law should not be treated cruelly.

Every child has the right to speak their own language and practise their own religion. Every child has the right to say what they think and to be heard.

Every child has the right to meet their friends and join groups.

This is a selection of rights from the UNCRC. For the full version see www.unicef.org/crc

MATCHING PERSON TO PROFESSION

Astronaut

Women's rights advocate

Women's rights defender

Politician

Dance choreographer

Architect

Fashion designer

