

## Classroom set Activity 1: It's a girl thing or a boy thing?

(Adapted from Robert Gordon University Challenging Gender Stereotype Lesson Plans)

**Description:** Warm up activity to raise awareness of gender stereotyping in our thinking.

**Activity Instructions:** Read out the following list and ask for hands up if you think it's a girl thing and no hand up if you think it's a boy thing or vice versa.

- Burping and Farting
- Rescuing
- Dancing
- Teacher
- Cooking
- Pink
- Doctor
- Nurse
- Cars
- A six pack
- Diet drinks
- Scientist
- Blue
- Cleaning
- Lawyer
- Engineer
- Set of spanners
- Computer programmer
- Red
- Glitter
- Mathematician

Once you have read through the whole list ask the following questions:

- Why do you think there was so much agreement?
- Where do these ideas come from?
- Is it true that these are just girls or boys things?
- Where are these answers coming from?

**Explain gender roles:** From an early age we have a clear idea of gender roles which include what things we like, behaviours and choices that are associated with being male or female. We then conform to those roles and identify with them. These ideas come from all sorts of sources - our families, the media, what we see in our world. Studies have even shown that parents speak differently to baby boys and girls and our cultural beliefs re-enforce what is seen to be acceptable behaviour of males or females. This includes what we do, what we like and how we behave.

Show one or both of these clips:

[Children Talking about Gender Roles](#) and/or  
Inspiring The Future - Redraw The Balance

How many of us actually fit totally or at all into these gender roles? If we do, is that not perhaps because we've had those ideas drummed into us from an early age?

**Class discussion:** Spend some time unpacking whether we "fit totally" into gender stereotypes and discuss the diversity and uniqueness of each person. It could be helpful to do some positive affirmations to support pupil resilience and confidence to resist stereotypes, for example "it's great that girls are part of the science club".

## Classroom Activity 2: Where do you stand?

(Adapted from Robert Gordon University Challenging Gender Stereotype Lesson Plans)

**Aim:** To allow young people to talk about their opinions and raise awareness of gender stereotyping.

**Activity Instructions:** Identify one side of the room as agree and one side as disagree.

Class to stand in the middle with space for them to move along a spectrum from agree to disagree. Read out a few of these statements; always read those in bold. Following each statement ask the pupils to move to a place on the agree/disagree spectrum that reflects their view. Facilitate discussion after pupils have positioned themselves, asking them why they have stood there. Sum up the agree/disagree activity and identify anything that stands out for you as a facilitator.

List of statements:

- People should go for the jobs they think they would be good at and are interested in.
- Maths is really difficult.
- Your gender should have no impact on your subject choices.
- I would always encourage my peers to do whatever subjects they want.
- Nursing is a profession best suited to women.
- Males and females are equal
- Boys are better than girls at Maths.
- Girls do better in school than boys.
- Design Technology is a “boys” subject.
- Being the only male/female in a class would put me off choosing that subject.
- The best job for you is one that matches your skills, abilities and personal qualities.
- Boys are better at computers than girls.
- Girls are better at sports than boys.

**Educator Questions:** Does this work? Would you use it? Is it practical?

What would you do about the issues it raises, during the exercise and afterwards?

What support would you need to deal with the exercise and afterwards?

How can you ensure there is a safe space for pupils to participate?

### **Classroom Activity 3: Gender Lens exercise and subject choices**

*'Think of a gender lens as putting on spectacles. Out of one lens of the spectacles, you see the participation, needs and realities of women. Out of the other lens, you see the participation, needs and realities of men. Your sight or vision is the combination of what each eye sees.'*

Facilitate group discussion around their subject choices, whether they feel they are shaped by gender stereotypes, school/classroom culture etc. Introduce the concept of the gender lens and ask pupils to consider whether and how boys and girls have different experiences of making subject choices. This could work well as a carousel activity with some specific questions from the children and young people.

## **Classroom Activity 4: Gender Lightbulb exercise**

This is a very simple exercise where pupils are asked about a “gender lightbulb moment”.

A “gender lightbulb moment” is a time you became aware of being treated differently because of your gender. For example, a girl not being allowed to play football, or a boy being told he shouldn’t play with dolls. It could encompass anything from the toys you were allowed to play with, being aware of different rules for boys and girls, to feeling uncomfortable because of your gender in a certain situation.

This may be the first time children have been asked to consider this topic and reflect on it, so it may be helpful to provide some examples. Creating a safe place for sharing will be important here, as well as reminding pupils that it is about acknowledging and challenging gender stereotypes and not reinforcing them.

This exercise could involve:

- Introducing the idea of a gender lightbulb moment
- Giving a few examples which children and young people could relate to
- Filling out their answer on a large piece of card shaped like a lightbulb then hanging them up on a string in the classroom
- Using the “gender lightbulb moments” shared, reflect together on how gender stereotyping affects our everyday lives
- Discuss as a class how to challenge these stereotypes
- Do the pupils think there is anything different the school can do about the issues they’ve identified?

For further ideas related to this activity you can find more examples in Young Women’s Movement’s Status of Young Women in Scotland 2015 report <http://www.ywcascotland.org/status-young-women-scotland-2015/>