CHALLENGING GENDER STEREOTYPES TOOLKIT

Women and girls suffer the majority of the negative impacts of rigid gender norms, roles and stereotypes. They are more likely to experience restrictions of their freedom and mobility, and experience epidemic levels of violence and harassment, meaning they have fewer opportunities to choose how to live their lives.

The gender stereotypes we have towards boys and men also impact this too. Stereotypical ideas and negative masculinities about what it means to be a 'man' can encourage boys and men to perpetuate this cycle of discrimination and equality.

Therefore, this toolkit has been designed as a comprehensive guide to help you understand gender stereotyping, recognise some of the signs and ways you can challenge these stereotypes. We want this toolkit to help you feel fully equipped in challenging all negative gender stereotypes, so that you can share this knowledge with others.

> **A GENERALISED VIEW OR PRECONCEPTION ABOUT ATTRIBUTES, CHARACTERISTICS OR THE ROLES THAT ARE OUGHT TO BE POSSESSED OR PERFORMED BY WOMEN AND MEN**

WHAT IS A GENDER STEREOTYPE?

A *gender stereotype* is a generalised view or preconception about attributes or characteristics, or the roles that are or ought to be possessed by, or performed by women and men.

Gender stereotyping refers to the practice of ascribing to an individual woman or man's specific attributes, characteristics, or roles by reason only of her or his membership in the social group of women or men.

WHY ARE GENDER STEREOTYPES HARMFUL?

Gender stereotypes can be harmful as they often limit women's and men's capacity to develop their personal abilities, pursue their professional careers and make choices about their lives.

Wrongful gender stereotyping is a frequent cause of discrimination against women and a contributing factor in violations of a vast array of rights such as the rights to:

- Health
- Standard of living
- Freedom of expression
- Freedom of movement
- Work
- Education
- Political participation and representation
- Marriage and family
- Freedom from gender-based violence

EXAMPLES OF GENDER STEREOTYPES AT ALL STAGES IN LIFE

It is important to be able to identify gender stereotypes throughout all stages of life. This could prevent harmful gender norms developing in later life, helping to put a stop to the wrongful gender stereotyping that is frequent cause of discrimination for women and girls.

Source: Gender Equality Law

EARLY YEARS

Girls should play with dolls and boys should play with cars
Boys should be directed to like blue and green, girls towards pink
Boys should not wear dresses or other clothes that are typically associated with 'girls clothes'

DURING YOUTH

Girls are better at reading, boys better at are better at mathematics
Girls should be well behaved, boys are expected to act out
Girls are not as interested as boys in STEM subjects
Boys are expected to use violence and aggression to prove their manliness
A boy that doesn't use violence or aggression is an understandable target for bullying
Girls should be thin and 'beautiful' to make them appealing to men

AS ADULTS

Victims of intimate partner violence are weak because they stay in the relationship

There is something wrong with a woman who doesn't want children

Assertive women are unfeminine and are "bossy," "bitches" or "whores"

Women are natural nurturers; men are natural leaders

Women don't need equal pay because they are supported by their husbands

Women who appear less feminine or reject advances from men aren't real women

Women with children are less devoted to their jobs

Men who spend time with family are less masculine and poor breadwinners

In heterosexual couples, women should take time off to care for children or elders

Men who are not aggressive and/or assertive are unmanly

Same-sex couples cannot make good parents

Women are too emotional to undertake certain kinds of work, especially while pregnant

Men are too impersonal and not emotionally apt to take on tasks "better done by women"

TASK

1) Name at least one more gender stereotype you have heard for each age group above
2) Think, why may these be harmful?

WAYS TO CHALLENGE GENDER STEREOTYPES

POINT IT OUT

Whether that's in magazines, TV, film or the internet - they are full of negative gender stereotypes. Individuals that may not be as clued up as you on gender stereotypes might find them hard to spot - so be that person and point them out! Talk with friends and family members about the stereotypes you see and help others understand how sexism and gender stereotypes can be harmful.

BE A LIVING EXAMPLE

Be a role model to your peers and respect others regardless of societal gender stereotypes. By creating a safe space for others, they will be able to express themselves and their true qualities regardless of societies gender stereotypes, expectations and discriminations.

SPEAK UP

If someone is cohering to harmful gender stereotypes, is making a sexist joke or comment, online or in person - challenge them. *This may sound easier than it is in practice. That's why we have created the upcoming section to help equip you in these situations:*

SPEAK UP WHEN SOMEONE USES SEXIST OR GENDER STEREOTYPICAL LANGUAGE

One of the best ways to challenge gender stereotypes is by speaking up when someone uses sexist or gendered language and behaviour. This can sound like:

- Abusive, insulting or sexualised language (e.g. terms such as slag, sket, whore)
- Sexist or sexualised insults about clothing, body shape or sexual activity (e.g stating it was the woman's fault in a case of abuse for wearing a skirt that was 'too short')
- Sexist assumptions and stereotypes (e.g. 'Girls are better at...' or 'Only boys can...')
- Using 'girl' as an insult or being told to 'man up' (e.g. throwing like a girl)
- Gendered language for jobs (e.g. Fireman) this suggests a woman's contribution society is less

PROMPTS YOU CAN USE TO SPEAK UP:

🟧 - Questioning response 🟦 - Confronting response ⬛ - Personal response

Sexist language is as insulting as racist or homophobic language

I find that language really offensive

How do you think that comment will make the women around you feel?

A lot of people would find that offensive

What makes you think that?

Attitudes like that are outdated and not acceptable

I'm not happy with what you said

What do you mean by that?