

GENDER STEREOTYPING IS BAD FOR MEN TOO

Gender role
 Stereotype
 Masculinity
 Gender equality
 Women
 Gender-based violence
 Control
 Violence
 Aggressive
 Financial abuse
 Sex (sexual activity)
 Condom
 Coerced/forced sex
 Balance of power
 Values

- ✓ 1. To identify roles and **stereotypes** associated with masculinity.
- ✓ 2. For learners to recognise their assumptions about **masculinity**.
- ✓ 3. For learners to confront gender stereotypes.
- ✓ 4. To explore the implications for **gender equality**.

🕒 1 hour

★ Comic: 'A Day in the Life' (provided)

PROCEDURE

- 1 Put the provided cartoon on the board or hand a copy to each learner.
- 2 Now, ask each learner to write down the answers to the following questions: (this should take about 15 minutes)
 - a. What are the **stereotypes** about **masculinity** that are illustrated in these pictures?
 - b. Are men portrayed in a positive (good) way or a negative (bad) way?
 - c. What are the positive, and the negative, effects of these stereotypes on men?
 - d. How do stereotypes about men affect women?
 - e. In what ways are these stereotypes inaccurate, or untrue?
- 3 Ask learners to share their answers with the group. Make sure to go through all the questions.
- 4 Now ask: How do stereotypes about masculinity contribute to gender-based violence? Guide the discussion to include the following:
 - Men and boys are seen as **controlling** and physically dominating. One way that they may 'live up' to these stereotypes is to exert **control** in their intimate relationships. They may even use physical **violence** to demonstrate their physical dominance.

- Men and boys are seen as insensitive or unfeeling. As a result men may feel that they should not have, or show, feelings, or be considerate of their partner's feelings. This can result in an emotionally empty, or even abusive, relationship.
- When men and boys are not encouraged to express their feelings in a healthy way, they may find that anger and aggression are the only way to express emotion. This can lead to **aggressive** behaviour toward **women** and partners, who may be seen as easy targets for pent-up frustrations.
- Men are stereotyped as being the economic head of the household, or the bread-winner. Men who believe that this is their role alone, may insist that their partners do not seek work, which in turn keeps them financially dependent and vulnerable to **financial abuse**.
- If men see paid work as the most valuable, and see domestic work (done by women to maintain the household and children) as unimportant, then they are more likely to use their role as the breadwinner to dominate their partner.
- Men and boys are stereotyped as being sexually dominant. As a result men may feel pressure to engage in more than one relationship at a time, engage in risky sexual behaviour such as forcing a partner to have sex without a **condom**, or **coerce/force sex**.



Chapter 1: Gender | Exercise 4

5 Follow this discussion by asking: How can challenging these stereotypes help us prevent or curb **gender-based violence**? Consider the following:

- By challenging the stereotype that men and boys are **controlling** and physically dominating, and instead encouraging them to see themselves as equal with **women** and girls, and as equal partners in relationships. In this way these relationships may be based on negotiation, compromise and a **balance of power**.
- By encouraging men and boys to understand and express a full range of emotions and to be respectful of other people's feelings, intimate partner relationships can be based on communication, understanding and respect.
- If men and boys are encouraged to express their feelings in a healthy way, they will be less likely to see anger and aggression as the only form of expression, and may be less likely to direct anger toward intimate partners.
- By breaking down stereotypes about men being the economic head of the household and earning money as an important part of masculinity, more men may be accepting of their partners pursuing careers, becoming financially independent and sharing the financial responsibilities of the household. Some men may even then prefer to stay at home and look after children whilst their partners go to work.
- If men and boys see domestic work as valuable and equal to paid work, they will be less likely to use their earning power and their partner's financial dependence, to dominate her. Rather, men who are bread-winners will see the domestic work of their partners as vital to the upkeep of the household, rearing of the children, and to enabling him to go to work.
- If men and boys see themselves as sexually equal to women and girls, sex can be a consensual, negotiated, respectful, and mutually enjoyable experience for all involved.

TEACHER TIPS



General

This exercise is intended to help learners confront stereotypes that make men and boys seem one-dimensional and homogenous. This over-simplification masks the variation in masculinities and undermines the more emotional, sensitive and creative aspects to men's identities.

Teachers should encourage boys to share their experiences, and to express instances where their experiences have been at odds with, or supported by, gendered societal expectations.



Making the Link with Gender & Violence

This exercise addresses assumptions about masculinity that encourage aggressive or dominant behaviour and which can lead to violence. Teachers should encourage learners to think critically about why these experiences were rewarding or upsetting.



Assessment Ideas

This exercise is intended to help learners reflect on their own stereotypes and gendered **values**, and is not recommended for assessment.



GENDER STEREOTYPES

Show this cartoon to the class to start the discussion.

A DAY IN THE LIFE...

