

The Gender Box

CASEL Core Competencies: Self-awareness, social awareness, relationship skills

State Health Standards: Standard 2, Standard 3, Standard 4

Learner/Participant Objectives: Learners will learn key terms related to gender identity and gender roles. Learners will learn the definition of a stereotype and how society uses stereotypes when discussing gender and gender roles or explaining a person's gender identity. Learners will learn and critically discuss how gender identity and related concepts impact their lives within school, at home and in the community. Learners will learn how society, media, culture, friends, or family impact a person's gender identity.

Content Warnings: Discussion around gender and gender identity may facilitate a range of responses from youth.

Facilitator Tips: Use the graphics provided under resources to help explain the key terms. Consider incorporating ground rules that involve non-judgment and respect for differences. Facilitators may consider having youth self-identify nonverbally, like writing their identity on paper. Youth identify when they are ready and who they trust. Sharing and encouraging participants to share their pronouns can be helpful in generating an inclusive space here, but make sure to assure youth that they only need to give their pronouns if they feel comfortable. Remember gender and gender identity are fluid.

Key Terms: Gender identity, transgender, cisgender, non-binary, gender expansive, gender fluid, gender nonconforming, gender queer, stereotype, gender role

Time: Two 60-minute sessions

Materials needed: virtual – digital whiteboard, sticky notes, markers, large white paper or dry erase board

Background: Gender is a socially constructed concept that dictates behavior of people based on their sex. If you are a man, society expects you to exhibit more masculine characteristics. If you are a woman, society expects you to exhibit more feminine characteristics. Society constantly reinforces gender by ensuring that men and women both conform to gender roles. If men or women deviate from these roles, they are likely to suffer verbal abuse and become ostracized until they re-conform to the norms of society. Femininity is conceived in stereotypical terms leaving no possibility of variation.

Resources:

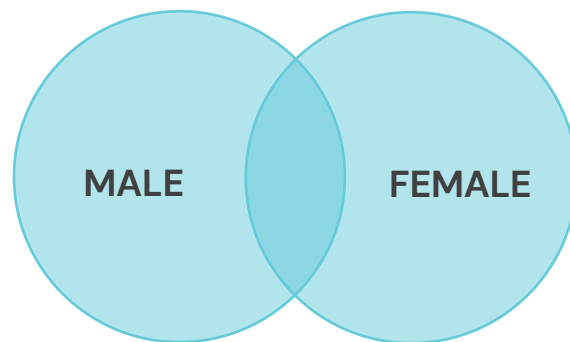
- <https://www.hrc.org/resources/glossary-of-terms>
- <https://images.app.goo.gl/kUa7vxRoA2ITCkRX6>
- <https://images.app.goo.gl/DLifU29YpXJQY83w6>
- <https://images.app.goo.gl/ZSH2hMi5ZSbEcmaN6>
- <https://images.app.goo.gl/MfC4MDPKduTwejqh6>

References:

- <https://transstudent.org/gender>
- Schippers, Mimi. (2007) "Recovering the Feminine Other: Masculinity, Femininity, and Gender Hegemony." *Theory and Soci-ety* 36, no.1, 85-102

Procedure: Session 1

- Begin the session by defining gender identity.
 - **Gender Identity:** One's internal sense of being male, female, neither of these, both, or another gender(s). Everyone has a gender identity, including you.
- Ask the group to think about the benefits of identifying as a male and/or female. Have the participants record their responses on the digital whiteboard within a Venn diagram (example below).



- Ask the group to think about how identifying as a male and/or female restricts or limits them. Have the participants record their responses on the digital whiteboard within the Venn diagram.
- Have the participants identify which of these experiences are shared between the two gender identities within the Venn diagram.
- Ask the participants to identify all the negative or non-inclusive items in the Venn diagram. As they identify these, write them outside of the Venn diagram.
- Introduce the following identities that do not fit within the binary construction of male and female.
 - Transgender
 - Cisgender
 - Non-binary
 - Gender expansive
 - Gender fluid
 - Gender nonconforming
 - Gender queer

Please see resources:
<https://www.hrc.org/resources/glossary-of-terms>

- Facilitate a dialogue with the following questions. Provide options to respond orally, written and anonymously.
 - How do you identify?
 - Does your identity fit within the binary gender box?
 - How does your identity benefit you at home, school or in your community?
 - How does your identity restrict or limit you at home, school or in your community?
 - How can the binary gender box be expanded to represent all genders?

Procedure: Session 2

- Share the following definitions:
 - **Gender role:** the role or behavior learned by a person as appropriate to their gender, determined by the prevailing cultural norms.
 - **Stereotype:** A stereotype is a mistaken idea or belief many people have about a thing or group that is based upon how they look on the outside, which may be untrue or only partly true. Stereotyping people is a type of prejudice because what is on the outside is a small part of who a person is.
- Watch <https://youtu.be/UlhODnFUGsk>. Then, facilitate a dialogue with the following questions:
 - How does society expect you to act?
 - How does this make you feel?
- Watch <https://youtu.be/q7-FDCSsWpM> (STOP at 1:51). Then, facilitate a dialogue with the following questions:
 - What were some of the negative stereotypes you witnessed in the video?
 - How did those negative stereotypes affect the persons in the video?
 - How did the camp leader challenge negative gender stereotypes?
 - How can you challenge negative gender stereotypes?